

The Pop Festival

Featuring: The Silent Faces

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THE SILENT TRILOGY (1 Oct 2003)

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Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword. (Matthew 10:34)

To my mother and father
with thanks for a Christian upbringing

BOOK ONE

The Pop Festival
John Armstrong Walker

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The Destroy Boys

Legion Lovers

Virago Girls

Jeans Boys

Rude Boys

Unisexers

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1 Pop Goes the World

‘Is there ever going to be a time when people will love each other?’ David asked his friends.

‘It’s up to you and I to give the answers,’ replied Peter sharply.

I could see Peter was the clever one of the three children; he knew that it lay within him to produce answers - even at the great age of eight.

Beside Peter, Sylvia stared lost in a dream world where boys hid in cupboards, and when she found them she would kiss them, then close the door.

Suddenly, up like a shot she got from the large red cushion on the floor, and she said, ‘I think we should all go Peter. I think we should visit your mummy, upstairs.’

Just at that moment in walked the jovial Mr Watson, and he shouted in a daft voice, ‘HELLO CHILDREN!’

Mr Watson then moved to take up his stance at the fireplace, and he started to act like the king of the castle.

‘Mr Watson have you got many old Pop records?’ asked David cheekily.

Mr Watson was immediately transported to the past by the little one and, after a few seconds, he said sadly, ‘Ah, Pop records, they don’t make them like that any more, son.’

Wondering if our generation is unique, I asked him, 'What do you think of the new fashion of biblical robes, that change colour in the light, and the new movement who wear them who call themselves Silent Faces?'

'Oh, God knows what we will get next,' he said, as he stared at my colourful biblical robe.

The three children all looked up at me, then little David cried, 'Pop goes the world!'

You see the three children knew, like everyone else, the Pop world was over; but because children are children, everything is new to them - especially the past.

'Right you three, what are you going to be doing this afternoon?' said Mr Watson, in high spirits.

Sylvia, full of excitement, somehow managed to get another sentence out, 'Because it's raining, Mr Watson, can we all stay here and listen to your old Pop records?'

'Of course, you can. Now would any of you like some bubbly orange?' asked Mr Watson, as he rubbed his big hands together.

'Yes, Yes, Yes,' sang the three children back to him.

After the singing, Peter shyly moved from the settee, leaving the others to play with their cassettes and videos on the comfortable floor. Then he stood near the doorway.

The house we were in was called Athens Wood, and was situated on the outskirts of Glasgow, not far from a new town. Like the other rooms the dining room had many different influences: something's were modern, something's were old. And as I looked down onto the floor, I noticed some stains probably made by the animals, that came and went to the master's voice, on the red light carpet.

The children called Mr Watson, Mr Fahrenheit. They said that he was bald because he had outgrown his proper size, and come through the top of his head.

Turning from the children, Mr Watson spoke to me again, 'Lawrence, Brian won't be long he is washing his hair.'

Then with a very quick look, Mr Watson explained to the room, and everyone in it, that the styling of his son's hair was totally unnecessary - a real waste of time.

Mr Watson then walked to the door sergeant major style, but was made to stop, because the large wooden door swung open at that moment, and his son Brian came in wearing his biblical robe.

'Hi Lawrence,' Brian said, as he rushed into the room nearly knocking over his father.

Brian then noticed the children playing on the floor, and he immediately nodded towards them. After this he looked in the direction of his father's voice.

'Remember and phone gran tomorrow, son, won't you.'

Those fatherly words made them stare at each other for a few moments, bonded in agreements and standards.

'Okay,' said Brian.

My Silent Face friend then transferred a look to me of freedom, and whatever possibilities we had of escape from the Pop father talk.

'Where are you going tonight?' asked his father, as if he was still talking to the children.

Brian replied at once, 'Oh, we are going into the city dad. It's the anniversary of the end of the Pop world, and there will be lots of things going on.'

'Yes, that's right, it's the Pop Festival, tonight,' I said.

Brian's father inquired sternly, 'Are you going to a Silent Bar?'

Mrs Watson or Mrs Fahrenheit - whatever you prefer - immediately came into the room when she heard the words Silent Bar spoken.

I think if Brian had mentioned the words Silent Bar in the toilet his mother would have appeared there and then.

Brian was not in anyway secretive about his life, and I was pretty sure he would have taken them there on request. But it must be said, at this point in the story, there are not many old Pop people out in the Silent scene these days. There may be one or two, but they tend to be mainly loners or artists.

‘What happens in the Silent Bars at night?’ inquired Brian’s mother, like an SS officer.

The question was thrown between us, but it was me she looked at. Hoping that she would understand, I replied quickly, ‘They don’t get going generally to about nine o’clock. You have a few drinks, that sort of thing. Then the stewards come round...’

At this point, Brian’s mother looked at him. Then Brian looked at me with fear in his eyes, that I noticed faded to embarrassment, as I continued speaking.

‘They come round with a baton.’

‘Baton!’ cried Mrs Watson, who again looked at her husband.

‘Yes, well it’s a small truncheon, and they also ring a small hand bell as they walk round to get everyone’s attention. All the proper permission has been obtained from the council, and any troublemakers are ejected from the premises, right away.’

I spoke quickly and hoped that the information given would reassure Mr and Mrs Watson that the Silent Bars were reasonable places to go for entertainment at night-time.

However, Mrs Watson did not see it this way and, as she turned her face towards her husband, I noticed her eyes transfer some doubts and worries to him.

Although my statement on the Silent Bars in the city did not convince them, I tell you what it made me feel more confident. So throwing caution to the wind, I decided to say a little more about the brave new world we were living in.

‘Like I say, at five to ten the stewards come round ringing their small hand bells and waving their batons. This is the sign that the Silent Hour is about to commence, and for the next hour you must stay completely silent, and listen to the wonderful music.’

‘What type of music do they play?’ asked Mr Watson, as he lay back on the settee.

I told him that it was classical, and gave him a few examples of both old and new composers. I said in a confident tone, ‘Well, let’s see there’s Amabam, the Churchgoers, Gold Star Garish Mates, and of course Mozart, Bach, Brahms and Beethoven.’

Just after I had said this, a silence came round the room and told of petty things. Then all of a sudden Mrs Watson laughed as if she knew all about the music in the Silent scene.

‘Oh, there’s nothing new about Beethoven and Mozart,’ she said giving a little nod to her husband.

I thought there was and told her so: ‘Mozart is fabulous.’

‘He’s as old as the hills,’ she said coldly.

Mrs Watson then smiled in the direction of her husband, as if to reassure him that the family was still intact.

A little trapped, I replied, ‘But they play a whole lot of other types of music as well.’

But sadly my words never got through, and it was left to my Silent Face friend Brian to introduce his favourite music. Brian had told me not so long ago that he played soft art music at teatime, and the whole family had to attend or else there would be a brouhaha.

Brian’s mother listened attentively, but left no sign of approval or disapproval on her countenance, as her son went to some lengths to describe the intricacies of modern music.

Brian looked exhausted after he had finished speaking. It was as if he had just played all the instruments in one of the bands, and was now about to collapse during the encore.

Meanwhile, the children drifted out of the room; they alone seemed to know their destiny. And as we all watched them a child poem ran through me:

Tired eyes wonder and stare, they want to sleep, they want to stay. Life for the young is a golden haze, never to look upon adult ways....

Suddenly, the doorbell went ding-dong, and Brian got off his seat. Then Mr and Mrs Watson started chatting about house prices. So not being one to sit around and do nothing, I walked over to the old black piano at the far end of the room, and played a tune that I hoped would make the cocktail bar beam and sway in a multitude of dreams - not to mention endless possibilities.

‘That’s a good tune,’ said Mr Watson, who stood up at once and started to dance in the old-fashioned Pop way.

So, into this room of music and dance appeared Brian with my other Silent Face friend Ian, and there a mixture of politeness and stupidity greeted them.

‘Sit down,’ said Mrs Watson, pointing to one of the empty chairs.

Then Mr Watson roared, ‘Oh, there’s big whatshisname, with his biblical robe on. Now we have the three Silent Faces!’

As you can see an altogether strange situation - the old and the new - Pop people and Silent Faces. The Watsons were certainly a nice family, and it was only now and again that you heard sentiments from the lower world come up.

Ian, the well known zealot of the Silent scene, looked at Mr Watson, and just for a moment I thought there was going to be a fight. Thankfully, however, time passed and a typical Saturday turned to night, with coffee and cake being passed round.

The conversation in fact became quite varied between the three Silent Faces and the two old Pop people: Mr and Mrs Watson.

Mr Watson told a story about a woman he had met in his grocer’s shop at lunchtime. The woman had just lost her husband, and Mr Watson had to go out onto the street and look for him. ‘The bloke was half-cut, and the pubs were just an hour open, you would not believe that - would you,’ he said, staring at the image.

Mrs Watson on the other hand had had a good time: ‘We bought the town today, gran and I,’ she said convincingly.

But it was also apparent in her voice that she wanted to mollycoddle, and on and on she went till life finally resembled the supermarket. ‘Take what you can out of life, Ian - don’t dither,’ she said possessed by self-will.

This recommendation to affirm life, by Mrs Watson, made Ian uneasy, and I was sure it was only a matter of time before he would set the house on fire.

And so it was the way it happened, just when the light was fading and everyone was looking a little fed up, Ian the chief Silent

Face, quick as silver, good as gold, knew where their dark gloom lay. Mrs Watson was speaking about some terrible accident that had fallen upon someone famous.

‘Do you believe in God?’ Ian asked, as he looked into the eyes of the supremely confident Mrs Watson.

Surprisingly, she said nothing, and it was the king of the castle who replied. Mr Watson said, half-asleep, through a yawn, ‘Oh, I don’t know, son, look at all the disasters in the world.’

When he had finished speaking, Ian’s Silent Face stared at him. Mr Watson at this point was lying back on the settee with his head slightly tilted towards his wife’s shoulder, his eyes slow and motionless portraying Gypsy thoughts.

Ian on the other hand radiated self-assurance. It was as if at that moment he could have taken a walk around the room. The possessions seemed to be changing hands in an air of calm serenity before the storm.

For the next hour or so, we all sat listening to Ian’s brilliant understanding of life’s meaning, and we marvelled at his ability to take someone on, then bring them back to the fold again without leaving a trace of bad feeling.

During the argument, Ian smiled to me. I noticed that it was the same smile as when he had arrived. My Silent Face friend absolutely radiated life’s purpose and understanding, and I knew that love would pull him through all right. After explaining the balance of good and evil in society, Ian asked Mr Watson, ‘Do you believe in Jesus?’

Mr Watson seemed stunned and did not reply.

‘You see, Mr Watson, that’s why the Pop world ended - the world is not a vacuum, life has meaning.’

There was a long silence after this as we all circulated in separate worlds - silence wrapped in truth.

Breaking the silence, Brian jumped to his Pop parents defence, saying, ‘There are still a lot of old Pop people about, you know.’

I agreed with this and hoped it would bring us all back together again, 'Yes, I still see quite a lot of the old Pop people going about,' I said, to Ian.

But it was no use. Brian must have felt that he had to try and rescue his Pop parents position and, even though Ian and Brian wore the same style of biblical robe, they started to argue.

'That's right, there are still a lot of people living the old Pop lifestyle, and I for one am not against it,' said Brian, after a heated exchange with Ian.

Brian's defence of his Pop parents failed to break the deadlock; so I quickly changed track and asked everyone what they thought about the government's new proposals to shift a lot more TV programmes to the outside entertainment centres.

Mrs Watson, glad to get going again, said, 'Oh, they had to do something about what was going on.' Then she quickly followed up with, 'There was far too much unfit material coming into the home from the broadcasting companies.'

Mr Watson confirmed this and, in hypnotic tones, he added, 'Yes, dear, they had to do something, it was never like that in the early days of Pop, you know.'

This brought a hearty laugh from his wife, and the sound of joyful laughter filled the room once more. Not long after this, drinks were served by Mr Watson, and we proceeded to talk about the new entertainment centres that seemed to be springing up all over the place.

Mrs Watson, looking very alert after the bombshell, said, 'It's great, you know, you can buy a ticket anywhere for one of the new entertainment centres, choose your programme and meet your friends.'

At this point, Mrs Watson surveyed the room, I think looking for the coming week's film guide. But whatever it was that entered her mind passed - for it never appeared in speech - and she continued to chat along the same lines as her last conversation.

'You know, they have sectioned off the films from the chat shows, so if you like all that violent stuff, then there is a place for you, too.'

After she had finished speaking she looked at me, which was rather disconcerting: for I am as much interested in that sort of stuff as she is. However, not wishing for any more trouble I let it go.

I looked to the corner of the room where the old TV sat, and thought how times had changed. It seemed the poor old thing now flickered only for news and educational programmes. A phenomenon during Pop times had most definitely fallen from grace, and what could one say about the old TV: for the one that demanded perfect silence, was now silent. The one that you could not debate with - and who would urge you to break off from your real-life adventures to stare at its unreal senses had now been replaced by entertainment centres. Everyone felt sorry for the old goggle-box these days - the poor old thing.

‘GET OUT AND LIVE,’ was the motto of the people in the days of the Silent Faces.

You see entertainment centres, in the Silent scene, were built with the thought of bringing people back together again: for in Pop times the populace felt isolated in their cars and security homes. No one knows why Pop people lost touch with each other in a world of mass communication?

People in the days of the Silent Faces do not want to live their lives hiding from one another. They want to live their lives together, free from violence, where people can walk in safety through their communities. They want violence stamped on with the image of an iron fist, and they want everyone to worship the one God, from the cradle to the grave.

Meanwhile, back in Athens Wood the Watsons were busy making noises, clink, clink, clink, went the china and glasses. Cushions and chairs were put back in their home positions - even Daisy the dog came in and wagged her tail in a farewell gesture.

‘Have you got your keys, Brian?’ his mother shouted, as she headed out of the dining room towards the kitchen.

Brian hearing his mother’s voice shouted back at once, ‘Yes, I’ve got them mum!’ then he followed her into the kitchen.

It was obvious it was time to go, and when we arrived in the spotless kitchen, Ian and I were both surprised to see mother and son in a good luck embrace. And it was most definitely this that made us take little backward steps away, back to the living room, with amusement written on our young Silent Faces.

‘Do you think it will be okay to go in now?’ asked Ian, as he looked down at Daisy the dog.

After a few more embarrassing seconds we re-entered the kitchen - only to find Mrs Watson holding the door open for us.

‘Come in, young Silent Faces,’ she said, as if trying to be part of our new scene.

She then, after this, went on to ask different questions about who would be out in the Silent scene tonight, as it was Pop Festival night.

Brian chatted with his mother for a few moments, so with manners taught I moved towards the window, and gazed outside into the distant country fields, where a small road made a serpentine figure through a working-class area - that some say society has rejected. It certainly was a different sort of area than the one we were in - that’s for sure.

‘We’d better get going, mum,’ said Brian, after kissing his mother’s cheek.

So, three young Silent Faces from the modern world went outside to see what was happening at this year’s Pop Festival.

‘Good luck, Silent Faces!’ shouted Mr and Mrs Watson, as they watched us go.

2 To the City

On the way to the city we passed many expensive homes. One of them I thought looked like a giant portable loo; however most were of good taste, especially the familiar old stone built mansion, guarded by the newly cut traditional lawn.

‘Lawrence, do you know who stays in Richmond?’ Brian asked, as he pointed at the old Tudor mansion we were passing.

I told him that I thought it was the girl with the long blonde hair. Brian thought for a moment, but the image of the blonde beauty, I could see, did not ring any familiar bells in forgetful hazel eyes. So I tried to remind him of the very same girl who goes out with the chap in the local jazz band.

Just at that moment Ian, who had once danced with her at an art party, interrupted me, ‘Oh, is it that lovely girl who goes by the name of Marilyn?’

‘Yes, that’s the lovely girl,’ I sighed.

Thankfully, Brian recognised the girl and just to show he was not faking he put both his hands out to indicate the young lady’s chest size. Then my Silent Face friend made a comic face that said it would take a lot of courage to love the girl with the long blonde hair and the beautiful large breasts.

Richmond was the last house before we came to the open countryside; a countryside, needless to say, that had no doors to run to, and only farm lights to guide night-time travellers to the city. Fortunately, for our Silent Faces the moonlight came through the trees and showed us the way over the burn. There for a time we watched the last remnants of light secretly dance in the coloured mudstones.

After we crossed the river, not far from the old church, we rested for a while, lying up against the old grey sandstone wall, and our Silent Faces watched the gentle flow of water make white kickbacks.

Just as we were about to leave a strange figure came into view; at first the bird looked frightened as it sat on the bank drying its wings. And in my scramble for knowledge through the dim light, I found it to be a Heron - probably lost making its way down stream to the country estate.

‘What is it?’ Brian asked, as he stared at the strange figure.

‘I think it’s a Heron,’ I said turning to him.

Just at that moment Ian thunder-clapped his hands and the loud sound made the nervous bird fly into the evening sky, where it could be seen no more.

The next thing I knew was that Brian and Ian were running from the bridge shouting and laughing.

‘Come on Lawrence!’

‘You’ll never catch us!’

‘Hurry up!’

‘We’ll miss the Pop Festival!’

‘Come on!’

And they were nearly right, for it was only at the corner of the road where the wood reveals past glories, where legend tells us that Hercules’s sweat still stains the leaves of the poplar trees, that Ian saw me approach, and he started to wave his whisky flask in front of my eyes.

Presently, Ian handed round the silver flask that had the initials I.C.W. on it, and not long after this we were all back in boyhood spirits again. And as we walked, Brian talked about all

sorts of things, till he coughed, and then he muttered to himself something about a girl he had met at last year's Pop Festival.

Moments later, Brian looked over at the tall trees again, then he said in a low voice, 'Wonder what time it is?'

Ian smiled at him, and then out of the blue he clapped his hands, and sung one of his favourite songs to the treetops:

*Time and tide wait for no one; I wonder why watching the landscape lines,
where the sky meets an ocean, and nothing to save you from your fate in life.
Memories face she looks so lonely, the future is made glazed in a failing light;
for tomorrow is no ones, lost and afraid by the thoughts and the things you like,
till you find, time leaves no one...*

The song seemed to echo in the breeze somehow, and not long after this Brian and I took turns to sing our favourite old Pop tunes. Then we danced all the way to the end of the wooded area; once we got there, however, a silence came upon us like a curtain drawn in a theatre, as we entered the small village named Millerston.

Millerston with its white buildings lies on the south side of the city. They say at one-time, long before Pop culture, a strong community lived here for about 200 years or so. Millerston had once a reputation as a no-nonsense place, known for its toughness and fair-minded folk. In the past everyone would have respected you if you had said to them that you came from Millerston. That is what they say anyway. What can be said, it was a community hard in the sense like marble, classic and colourful, where at each staging post of life men would stand tall and proud, almost Greek like, trading in every lyric line scorched-faced by the sun, knowing fine well that eventually life would wear them out: for triumph and tragedy are inseparable.

And as we walked through Millerston I could feel old neighbours calling me on, whispering in the wind: 'Lawrence, you must protect yourself. You must take care...'

Then Ian's voice came out of the silence, knowing and wondering, 'Lawrence what are you thinking about?'

I replied at once, and searched his eyes as if he was already aware of my answer, 'Oh, I'm just thinking about a place near to where I was born - that's all.'

No one thereafter said anything, and our three Silent Faces walked through the village in search of the station. Everything in Millerston seemed old tonight. It was as if time was now unveiling herself just for our Silent Faces.

However, shortly after this the atmosphere changed, and we entered the modern magnetic train station. So with our travel passes in hand we promptly positioned ourselves track-side, and waited for the next magnetic train to Glasgow Central.

Ian, the oldest of the three Silent Faces, started joking with Brian about his footwear, 'Look at those Doc Martens,' he said, pointing at Brian's feet.

Brian looked down at once. Then Ian added, 'They're as old as the electric trains that used to run around here.'

Brian laughed and said that he had put them on because it was the Pop Festival tonight. Thankfully, the laughter seemed to take away the eeriness of the station, and the objects in front of our eyes started to move to a sort of musical setting: with the station workers arriving in quick time, moving silently between the station cleaners, who waltzed with little brush strokes swift and short. But it was the old-fashioned Pop tunes that drifted out from the ticket office that reminded us about what time we were travelling back to.

The Pop world may be over,' I thought to myself, 'but the traditions of travel stretch way back to the beginning of time. And in our new world - as in the old - there is a class system where the elite separate themselves from the working class.'

By the way our top nobs are called Stags, by the ones who make up names in the Silent scene. Stag is a term, I believe, drawn from the money markets in the city. The Stags, in search of the folding stuff, they say roam around the financial centres from morning till night in the Silent scene.

Over from the Stags, in amongst the working class faces, I spotted a workmate of Ian's. 'There's whatshisname,' I said.

Ian, who had been staring at some of the girls dressed up in the images of the old Pop past, at once looked over to where my voice directed.

After a smile, he said slowly, 'Oh, so it is, I didn't know he lived around here.'

The workmate was strange all right; he stared as if he wanted to be turned to stone then statue. Ian after waving decided to shout his nickname, and all eyes on the Millerston platform went out to look for him.

'Cinders, over here!'

When Cinders finally arrived through the crowd - that by the way looked as if they were all going to the Pop Festival in the city tonight - Ian introduced him to our Silent Faces.

With great feeling Ian put his hand on the man's shoulder to steady him, then he asked him kindly, 'How are you, Cinders, old boy?'

The poor man had just had a brain operation.

'N..ot baa.d,' slurred Cinders, in hollow tones.

After the introduction, Cinders continued to act strange; he stared straight ahead of him, and when he spoke his words seemed to get stuck together, before they quickened up again into a jumble.

'I..t's th..e se.co.nd sta.ge ty.pe; I'..ve h.aad do.ne. Yoo.u ju.st do..n't kn..ow. I.t cou..ld haa..ve b.eee.n th..e che..mic.als i.n th..e foo.d. I.t cou..ld haa..ve b.eee.n an..y.th.ing. Yoo.u ju.st do..n't kn..ow...'

As Cinders blinked, I noticed his stare did not release, then he continued with more staccato words.

'Th..e wo.rrk ha..ss b.eee.n gooo.d, yoo.u. kn..ow. I caa.n go.o.o b.aack an..y.ti.me I w.ant too.o.'

Cinders standing at the station stopped speaking for a moment and drifted outwards into no-man's-land, and he made me feel heart sorry for him. So, I quickly changed track and asked another question, hoping that with the help of a friend he would recover.

'Are you still keen on photography?' I said gently.

Cinders turned slowly towards me imitating a robot, and for a moment he really made me wonder if I was being received. Then out of no-man's-land he spoke to me again, 'I.t mi.gh.t haa..ve b.eee.n th..e caa.m.er.aa len..ss.es, yoo.u ju.st do..n't kn..ow.'

Something at that moment must have broken his concentration, for he moved away from our Silent Faces towards the display board, muttering to himself about some new political organisation that would eradicate all unnatural food substances on planet earth by the middle of the twenty-first century.

'Poor chap,' I said.

Brian and Ian strangely accepted it just like another event in life, nothing more nothing less, and as we watched him go, the display board rattled with lots more information. But sadly, I didn't think any of it would be of any help to poor old Cinders - although I think he would have replied: 'Yoo.u ju.st do..n't kn..ow.'

Our red dot was at the preceding station highlighted by its name and destination on the video screen. When I looked back for Cinders of the station I could not see him, and my sadness was only broken by the arrival of the magnetic train. This wonderful invention just seemed to glide along into the station. The magnetic train, as every Silent Face knows in the Silent scene, is the greatest invention of the twenty-first century.

Once inside the magnetic train we managed to find a row of three seats, near the back end of the train, next to the guard's van. And I must say the design features are really fantastic: little TV monitors above every row of seats, headphones for radios, and CD players, and all you need to get things going is an active credit card.

As I looked at tonight's Pop programme - that I had bought earlier on in the week - my attention was suddenly grabbed by an announcement from the guard's van: 'Good evening passengers, thank you for travelling with Sirius Express, would you please now fasten your safety belts, we shall be taking off soon. Anyone wishing to use the excellent facilities, available on the 7.21 from Millerston to Glasgow Central, may I remind them that this is the time to insert their credit card. Once again, may I say thank you

for travelling with Sirius Express, and I hope those of you travelling tonight to the Pop Festival, in the city, have a good time, thank you.'

Our companions on the opposite seats were a young couple dressed to the hilt in Pop memorabilia. They both shuffled nervously for a time in their borrowed clothes. As I looked at them, I wondered if they would be starting the night off in one of the Silent Bars in the city - the same as we planned to do.

Ian and Brian did not seem to notice the couple who later on wrapped themselves in cuddles and kisses, and who constantly stared at each other as if hypnotised by the magic of love.

Personally, I thought it was a great idea to dress up for the Festival every year, but somehow this year we all had decided to go in our present fashion of biblical robes and silk scarves. When I looked around the carriage, I thought it was about half-and-half between the ones who had decided to dress up for the festival, and the ones who had not. By the way, this includes the folk on their way to work. They always take part every year in the old Pop Festival.

Suddenly, hundreds of small lights dimmed all along the carriage and, in the quick seconds it took, the magnetic train hissed, then it pulled us towards the next station - the exciting part of travel had begun.

3 Silent Bars and Restaurants

In our usual silent fashion we walked passed the packs of people patterning the streets, all the time moving closer and closer to the centre. The grey city, lit up by night-lights, was awaiting our arrival, Glasgow a city with expectations, its love of money great - but not as big as its heart.

Before entering the Silent Bar I gave a last look down the neon streets to where hundreds of people were in procession celebrating the old Pop Festival. Then down the stairs we went tip tapping past the hangers-on, who were all silently staring at the blank walls, no doubt hoping for entry into the Silent scene. Brian who was in front followed some friends in biblical robes, and the warlike doors swung open.

‘Good evening Silent Faces,’ said the chief steward, who lucky for us Brian knew.

We thanked him then we moved to the bar and, as we made our way through the crowds of people, I heard a young lady say in a very sophisticated voice, ‘It would have been nice if everyone had dressed up for the Pop Festival this year - don’t you think.’

It was at this point that, I noticed Brian prepare himself to meet strangers and, as a social block in his manner appeared, his

spontaneity simply disappeared, 'This is the sadness of the city,' I thought to myself.

Meanwhile, in the mirror at the Silent Bar I saw the eccentrics. They were all dressed up in way-out fancy Pop clothes, and were starting to gather near the ice machine. One man stood out from all others. He went by the name, in the Silent scene, as the trouser feeler - a man to be avoided at all costs.

Just then Cathy and Clare appeared through the crowd and started waving and shouting.

'Lawrence, Brian, Ian - Silent Faces - how are you!'

Cathy and Clare are Silent Face girls.

As we all chatted, jumping in and out of conversation with great ease, Cathy seemed to be happy to skirt on the outside of life, while Clare got straight to the point. And although we were all around the same age - that is one and twenty - Clare seemed older somehow, in both mind and body.

Every time we met, Clare had an uncanny way of knowing the situation before anyone else. And as I looked at her, I could see danger signs coated in her dark brown silent eyes.

At the same time as producing a hundred pound note, Brian asked the assembled group, 'What do you want to drink?'

There was a pause as everyone thought about their tippie. Then Cathy made a face like a mouse and said, 'Could I have a G and T please.'

Then Clare, who was standing next to me at the Silent Bar, flowed to delight in speech, 'Please may I have a Brandy and lemonade, young sir,' she said, and smiled at Brian.

It is customary for the men in the Silent Bar to drink lager, so we all decided to order some fancy German named stuff - no doubt exported specially just for Silent Faces at the Pop Festival.

In the hustle and bustle Cathy came over to me, she seemed so excited about this year's Pop Festival.

'Oh, Lawrence, there are lots of things going on tonight, maybe we should have all dressed up in old-fashioned Pop clothes.'

And maybe we should have, but we had dressed up for every other Pop Festival. When I reminded her of happy times, that we

had spent dancing and going to parties, she laughed and relaxed, as if letting go all the tension in her life at that moment.

‘Oh, Lawrence, she said taking my hand, ‘we had some fun, right enough.’

The Silent Bar was beginning to fill up now. The main event was only something like fifteen minutes away.

‘It’s always the same when you’re waiting for the Silent Hour to begin, the people get so carried away,’ said Ian, as if he was the grand old man of the Silent scene.

After describing the way the organisers arrange for the lights to beam out brilliantly all around the arena, Cathy said to Brian, ‘But don’t you just love it when everything goes white.’

Just then I looked behind the Silent Bar and stared at the broken clock. The clock, to the best of my knowledge, had never been fixed since it had stopped during the opening night. ‘Timeless elegance, in the Silent scene,’ I thought to myself.

Time you must understand is very different in the Silent scene: for example people sing whenever they want to. So it was not surprising when a group, close to where we were standing, started singing an old Pop song. Something strangely about time and how it is unkind. Time, however, was getting nearer and nearer to the main event.

Just then, Clare came up to me, whispering, ‘So, how are you, Lawrence?’

‘Not bad,’ I said, after kissing her cheek.

Clare spoke in short extreme phrases telling me all about what she thought was art, and what she thought was not art, in the Silent scene at the moment.

‘Your philosophy is all hocus-pocus,’ I said to her, and she laughed.

Then I asked her, ‘How’s your father’s business?’

‘Oh, making a living,’ she replied, releasing her lips from the glass with an expensive kiss.

As you can see Clare is a bit of a Silent girl. We all stopped talking expecting the Silent Hour to begin, but there was no sign

of it yet. The people at the bar kept on singing old Pop tunes, so we carried on as before.

Cathy, I could hear was chatting to Ian about a mutual friend who could do no wrong in the business world, 'He makes more in one day than I do in a whole year,' she said stunned, but excited.

Clare at that moment looked at both Cathy and Ian with a face that indicated that she too understood all the moves in the great game called love.

Then Brian arrived back from some outward adventure, and immediately shouted, 'Great news, Silent Faces! There's a Pop party on at Cathedral Street celebrating the old Pop world - fancy going.'

Brian then waved a piece of paper high in the air, and started to dance in the disco Zulu fashion.

'Oh, that's interesting,' said Clare wondrously.

And as she looked at him, Clare's quick fashion comment deflated Brian a little. However, Brian turned to me with goodness in his eyes, and said with a smile, 'Your round, Lawrence.'

Everyone wanted the same as the last time, so I hurried along and tried to get there before the bar shut for the Silent Hour.

Clare came to help with the drinks and, as she brought out her purse, she said in a tempting voice, 'Make it doubles Lawrence - I'll give you some money.'

After handing in our order at the Silent Bar we watched some Silent Faces, and fancy dress Pop people, make their way to their seats. The bar woman realising the time quickly put the drinks in a tray, smiled, then shouted, 'Right, will that be all now, Silent Faces!'

So after we had paid for the drinks we walked back over to our friends, and then we all headed for our favourite seats that were over on the far side of the Silent Bar. Halfway through the crowd, I noticed that the stewards were starting to wave their batons, and ring their small hand bells that they carry around with them.

As the crowd of around 400 got ready, the master of ceremonies, from his position near one of the large video screens, shouted, 'Sixty seconds to silence!'

When everyone was seated, and all the faces were staring up at the wall-to-wall screens, the master of ceremonies checked with the chief steward, and when everything seemed to be in order the sound of hand bells rang out, over the low chant of voices. Presently, the lights were switched off, and the video screens displayed the forthcoming programme: the composer's name, his place of birth, and general information regarding his life and work. No one moved as the sound of the hand bells got louder and louder - then there was the sound of silence.

* * *

The symphony

The symphony drifted in slowly, saturating the quietness. Clare who was sitting next to me sat back, and as I gazed at the images on the screens, I was sure invisible choruses sang to me of broken hearts: 'Listen, listen, to the sadness of the strings.' Thousands of other images came, and floated into representations. However, I felt the chain was always the same: first there was hope, then love, followed by expectation, silver and gold were there too. And sometimes in my dream cities appeared through desert storms with people wandering around, while names fulfilled prophecy.

When the last movement started the singers sang with the knowledge that everything in this life is made by the creator, every human heart has a high marked in colours and tones. Ian smiled to Brian, then he indicated with the nod of the head, the chap who was conducting on the video screen. A man of about forty, dressed up in old Pop clothes, seated near the front, punched the air to the beat of the music. Young couples all around held and kissed each other. Everything seemed romantic and unreal in the Silent Bar for the Silent Hour. Our silent minds had travelled along with the symphony climbing high, descending low, and now it was time to enter the final stage.

Brian and Clare checked their watches. Nothing had been said during the performance, everyone had just sat and listened to the music. Everything seemed so wonderful and fantastic. After a pause the lower strings of the orchestra led us moodily into the final movement. We had been listening for nearly an hour now, in search of spirit, mind and matter; and when the end came, it came like a shout in the desert - like scripture:

*He ascended on high after he had taken his prisoners captive,
and gave gifts to men. (Ephesians 4:8)*

Outside, I imagined the streets and the thoughts to be one and the same. The whole day it seemed revolved around this moment. Ian and Cathy held each other, their faces touching, making our eyes gently move away, as a new romance blossomed. Beside Brian there was a man - an older man - who stared many years distant into his beer glass. He too had on old-fashioned Pop clothes. The man looked as if the music from the Silent Bar had transported him to another time. The symphony was to end a thousand times, as if it were defying time, then in a moment it was gone.

* * *

Suddenly, shouts and screams went up from everyone around the Silent Bar, bringing near pandemonium. The bar shutters screeched announcing opening time once again at the Silent Bar.

Brian, who was never one to get too excited, shouted my name, 'Lawrence! Excellent!'

Clare and Cathy, as the clapping continued, both laughed at each other, while Ian just quietly sipped his beer.

Cathy with the presence of someone who wanted to calm things down, asked me as she turned round, 'What do you want to drink, Lawrence?'

'The same as the last time,' I said, holding up my empty tumbler.

Moments later Cathy arrived back with the drinks helped by a show business friend called Max.

Max although helpful at passing the drinks around, and chatting as if there was no tomorrow or today, was a little unnerving to say the least. To put it bluntly Max was the type to take an inch then ask for a mile. He made a few quick bitch comments, and he seemed to me to be paranoid by unkind friends. Max was a very uneasy presence indeed.

He then opened up with city speak, 'Good God, look at those outfits!' he cried, as he stared at some of the people who were all dressed up in Pop clothes at the Silent Bar.

And it was there for all to see that Max was a member of the sect who go by the name, in the Silent scene, the Uncomforters. As everyone knows in the Silent scene the Uncomforters reject the Christian faith, and although like Max some wear the biblical robe their religion is false.

‘I see you haven’t dressed up for the Festival this year Max,’ said Cathy teasing him.

‘No darling, I never do. In fact, I don’t know why we celebrate the damn thing anyway, it was so long ago.’

Clare who also knew Max said, ‘Oh, come on Max, don’t be such a wet blanket.’

After introducing myself, I asked Max what he worked at. ‘Oh, I’m in the money grabbing business, darling,’ he said, with a sinister smile.

After this there was no stopping the quick talking talented Max, and he talked at great lengths about the problems that were stopping him coming from the outskirts into the city centre.

‘One day, I’m going to buy an office in the city,’ he said, as he wiggled his bottom.

Discussing problems and plans is helpful as everyone knows, but Max was not the type to give way. He went on and on for a while with rapid chitchat, (a favourite Uncomforters trick) no doubt trying to weaken his victims.

When he had finally finished speaking, I could see he was a natural actor, and that he understood how to steal every moment. I had also watched Ian track him, and when Max started up again - this time talking about an ex-girlfriend who as he put it was a horror - Ian our Silent Face hero cut him dead.

Ian changed the subject completely and complimented some of the girls who were wearing fancy dress Pop outfits. ‘I think they’re terrific,’ Ian said, and he pointed towards one or two Silent Faces who were passing by.

Max’s eyes opened wide, and he wondered why he was not talking - his time was up. ‘Cathy, I will see you later,’ he said showing signs of childhood disappointment, and he turned stage left to another play somewhere.

‘Bye, bye, Max,’ said Ian with a smile.

Our Silent Faces watched him go. Then after a few moments Cathy said softly to Ian, ‘You know, you really are an awful man.’

In an upbeat mood Brian put forward a proposal for the Silent Faces on Pop Festival night, ‘Do you fancy going to that Pop party at Cathedral Street?’ and after he had read the address out loud, Brian danced in the disco Zulu fashion again.

After laughing, everyone agreed that the Pop party seemed a good idea, and Cathy suggested that we grab something to eat on the way there.

‘Yea, good idea, I’m starving,’ said Brian, and presently we all headed out of the Silent Bar.

Thankfully, Mamma Mia the restaurant did not take long to reach. The restaurant lay just off Hope Street, and as the city bells chimed eleven o’clock, not far from the Italian restaurant, it struck me that the restaurant was of good quality - high above the light bites that one can see on every corner all over the city.

‘This is it!’ shouted Cathy, as she pulled up her black thermal tights under her robe.

Presently, we all moved inside peering over the pizza people. At the far end of the restaurant a waiter stood directing us to an area of availability.

‘There’s one, there,’ said Brian, seeing an empty table for five or six.

For some reason Brian on the way to the restaurant had decided to put on small round glasses, and I think it was this gesture of fashion that made him bump into a fat intellectual man - with similar specks - who was passing by the other way.

‘Watch where you’re going!’ shouted the fat intellectual man.

The fat intellectual man thereafter shook his head all the way to the toilet. He said to every table he passed, ‘Those bloody Silent Faces - they’re everywhere!’

Clare and Cathy laughed like little girls who had just espied something strange in a man, that I think they always knew was there, but had never witnessed before.

As we all sat down, Clare kept up the joke. You see Clare had notice Brian's glasses had got all steamed up, and this was the reason for the collision.

Believing his eyesight to be young and healthy, Clare asked Brian, 'Why do you wear glasses, Brian?'

Brian, half-asleep, half-embarrassed, replied, 'I think they give me an air of intellectuality.'

He then paused, and it made me wonder if 'intellectuality' made one tired.

'Oh, don't become like one of those Fish Tank Intellectuals, in the Silent scene,' lamented Cathy, in her best mother's voice.

Cathy I think felt that Brian saw the world now as a fish tank, and that from now on he thought nothing could penetrate his profound feelings.

Presently, a messenger with Latin looks arrived and handed everyone a large cardboard menu, then he asked in a broad Glaswegian accent, 'Would any of you like anything to drink?'

Clare knew the voice and looked up at once, 'When did you start here?' she said, as if the man was a complete fool.

'Oh, it seems like a hundred years ago,' moaned the Glasgow *camerière*.

They then went on to chat about the Housing Department, where they had both been employed last summer as temps.

As we all pondered what to eat, loud voices came to our table from drunken fancy dress Pop people who were sitting behind us. 'Oh, I'd give him one for the girls,' said a mysterious voice.

I watched as Ian and Cathy stared at the Pop people, but it was difficult for me to turn round; it would have been too obvious.

Brian, however, was not in the least bit interested. He continued to study the menu like a man looking for the right combination of food that would somehow save his life. 'Fancy the pollo arrosto,' he said with a hungry mouth.

Not long after this, I looked round to see where all the noise was coming from and, in two swift glances, I saw two women about forty with red faces and flashes of Pop. They had obviously

had far too much to drink, and were now trying to keep afloat with gestures and shouts to anyone passing by their table.

‘How’s it going big boy!’ shouted one of the women, to a waiter serving the table behind her.

Ian, after he had looked at the tipsy ladies, with worldly wisdom said, ‘There will be some queer types at the Pop party, tonight.’

Brian nodded to Ian, and I think he wondered about how people get into such a state with drink. This in turn made me wonder if they would turn up at the Pop party at Cathedral Street. And in a vision I imagined the two Pop women coming over to me, saying, ‘Were you in the restaurant Mamma Mia, tonight - you and your mates with your colourful biblical robes on - ah, the do-gooders, we seen yah.’ Then I saw one of them keel over and lie on the floor, and as she lay there she lamented, ‘Oh, I shouldn’t have drunk so much at the Pop Festival, hic...hic...’

The same Glasgow *cameriere* came back to our table hungry for an order; and as he stood there he acted as if he was really a tape recorder, recording: four pizzas, one pollo *arrosto*, three bottles of apple juice, two freshly squeezed orange juices, and a nearly forgotten side-salad with a large portion of chips - and that was that.

The waiter repeated the order back to Ian in perfect Italian, and when he had finished, Clare asked him where he had learned to speak the lingo.

‘Here yah dumpling,’ said the waiter in rhythm slang.

The Glasgow *cameriere* then laughed like someone who had just got his own back. Clare right away tried to distract his lack of professionalism, and drew our attention to some more Pop people who had just entered the restaurant Mamma Mia. ‘Look at their outfits, I wonder what Pop party they’re going to,’ she said with a little laugh.

Brian, who was puffing on an American cigarette, looked up, but he said nothing. Clare quite composed now, added, ‘You know they look as if they could be original Pop people.’ Then she asked me, ‘What do you think of them, Lawrence?’

Seeing them to be very old, I replied, 'I think it is very sad.'

Clare threw her head back in a familiar gesture, that indicated that she was ready to argue with the opposite sex.

'Oh, come off it, Lawrence!' she said in a harsh tone.

Brian watched the Pop people take their seats. Then he said plaintively, 'There okay, I suppose.'

Brian, you must understand does not like to make any statement that would mark him out in the scheme of things. For example Brian would never become involved with causes: Brian supports the old Pop world. Brian does not support the old Pop world. Brian supports the western world's defence system. Brian is anti nuclear. Brian does not think the country should pay everyone a certain wage. No, he at all times, and at all costs, avoids making himself known - well except to one or two special people.

I thought Clare understood this and in typical cat fashion she tried to weaken him by putting her own point of view forward in an extreme manner, like so: 'We've had enough of the old Pop trash in the last era, and it didn't work. You just have to look at all the videos and films from that time. And if you still don't believe me after that, then just ask your mother and father about the level of crime during Pop times, or the divorce rate. Things were in such a mess. There was no meaning to it all.'

The female fight that was quicker than any man's reaction made Cathy reply, 'There's meaning in everything.'

'There is meaning in everything except the old Pop world,' Clare retorted angrily.

Friendly laughter broke out, then confusion followed. Brian spoke next, 'Listen, maybe it was just a different sort of thing - that's all.'

Brian had no interest in societies past or present. Above all things, I think he wanted them to be fair - like people shaking hands - no bad feelings that sort of thing. He also had the good fortune, through breeding, to avoid making a fool of himself in front of the opposite sex. Brian had once told me that he thought women were like mirrors. He maintained that after he had looked into a female looking glass face, he came back feeling all

important: 'It's as if I have every fact or fancy at my fingertips,' was the famous quote.

This remark, along with his other great boast that he did not know what the truth was, but that lovers would lead him there, worried all his Silent Face friends.

Clare understood lots more and it was fascinating to watch her lay the ground for debate, air the controversy, then quickly retreat with the prize - although it was never quite clear to me what that exactly was.

So it did not surprise me when Clare asked me, with that old calculated stare of hers, 'Lawrence, were your folks Pop people?'

'Not really,' I said knowing that they had no interest in movements and cults.

When I had finished speaking, I found myself staring at Brian.

'Mine were,' he said with convicted embarrassment.

Everyone laughed, including Brian, who thankfully grasped the funny side of people and the past.

Later in the evening voices spread to our table telling us that more fancy dress Pop people had managed to find seats in the restaurant; some of them had dressed up in club colours, others imitated old Pop stars. Two couples sat down at the table next to us. They all smiled over at us as if they were famous, or rich, or something. Later on when they received their drinks' one of the old men stood up and shouted to the whole restaurant, 'Thank God for the old Pop world!' then he sat back down again - very strange I thought.

However, everyone cheered and held their glasses high in the air, and we all saluted the old Pop world again. Then moments later, someone started to sing an old Pop song, and lo and behold the whole restaurant joined in. The only bit that I could make out at first was the la, la, la, da, da, da, da, then the words became clear.

Ian was really on form tonight. I had never really seen him smile so much, and I had never heard him tell a joke before either.

This is how the joke went: ‘Did you hear the one about the schoolboy and the politician?’

‘No,’ said Clare, trying to annoy him.

‘Well, they both met one fine day during an election campaign. The politician put his fingers through the schoolboy’s hair. Then he asked him: “Why are you not at school, sonny?” To which the schoolboy replied, “Because I’ve got head lice, Mr.” ’

We all roared about with laughter. Then our conversation meandered through topics like: books, tickets for the theatre, other Silent Faces, race relations, love, and finally how your mother and father met.

A different *cameriere* came and went, leaving a bill in the middle of the table. Just before he left us, I noticed that he looked into the mirror behind us and smiled at himself. The smile was that of a fly man and, when the fly man flew to the table of the fat intellectual man, he showed off all the tricks he had learnt from the wide men of this world. He really was the typical fly man with all the accessories of that trade: he was a floorwalker, a financial adviser, a comic, and even on certain occasions he was a lawyer. There is another side to him voiced by mainly the proletariat, but I can give no evidence for or against it here. I only understood from the look he sent into mirrors and faces that he was a philosopher - a philosopher of the bluebottles.

4 Statue, Stalls and Speakers

Outside in the pouring rain we waited for Cathy. She had bumped into a friend of hers from college - but that was ten minutes ago. 'Where is Cathy?' said Clare, as she stamped the ground.

Ian, who it must be said was looking rather anxious, replied soberly, 'I think we shall have to send out the search party.'

However, just as we were about to go back into the restaurant Mamma Mia, Cathy appeared at the front door of the establishment, and shouted, 'Oh, come and meet Heather, Silent Faces! 'This was new to me, I had never seen the regal Cathy before; nevertheless we all went to Cathy's court, and said hello to her friend Heather.

As we stood there I could not help wondering why Cathy couldn't understand why we didn't like standing in the rain. Under the city street lamps her friend Heather looked to be a woman of around forty. Cathy's friend Heather spoke with a strong English accent. She said that she had just come from night classes where she had endeavoured to study the history of art.

Clare smiled at the mature student, then she looked to the ground, and from the vantage point of man, I could feel hatred between women - a strange sensation it was where silence screams.

Cathy concluded the discussion with the woman who liked art and coastal towns. Then we finally made our way towards the library, where all the crowds gather on Pop Festival night. Just before we turned off to go up to the grand old building, we all stood and looked up at the newly erected statue by the Rise and Rescue Christian Society.

The monolith stood about twenty feet high by about six feet wide with words that read: Philosophy in the Christian age everything must be turned to advantage

As we all stood around it searching the writing that glowed, Clare was first to speak, 'Strange these words,' she said.

'Mummmmmmmmm,' said Brian.

Moving off once more, we fitted back into the stream of Festival people; most of them I may add were all dressed up in way-out fancy Pop clothes. Then what seemed like minutes later someone laughed and made me look for them. Cathy must have noticed that the menfolk had fallen a little behind, and she shouted, 'Hurry up, you three!'

Cathy and Clare then began to skip like little girls, and I lost them for a moment in the crowd. The atmosphere of the crowds did not seem to stun them the way it did us. As we walked on I noticed that Brian kept on looking over his shoulder, and I wondered if someone was following us. He looked again, then he spoke about a man who was on the opposite side of the street. 'See that chap over there, the one with the pale face. He used to be a drug dealer.'

A mental picture of deals in back alleys with people slipping pills into hands for money, filled my mind with danger; you see it was so unusual to see any young man involved in the wrecking of people's lives in our new society.

My Silent Face friend must have noticed me looking at him. Brian said out of the side of his mouth, 'He was under the second battalion for two years, you know, on the programme Back to Life. I hope he has not gone back to his stupid ways again.'

As I looked at the chap in question, I was reminded of the fact that the second battalion was instructed by our government to

retrain all the drug addicts. The battalion had extensive facilities all over the country; they tried to help the boys of the bamboozled brains regain their fitness and return to society. It was a well known fact that in the close season they would fly the bamboozled boys to foreign countries like Africa and India, where they would help the soldiers distribute aid to the starving millions. The politicians, on the news, are always telling us about how the addicts reform after seeing real misery. The latest political poster outside every government office at the moment maintains: 'The military training seems to do the trick, you know: Drug Free.'

The Festival really started to come alive along the precinct where all the bars and restaurants were busy holding their own parties celebrating the old Pop world. And it seemed that a good majority of the traders had dressed up for the Festival this year, and were in high spirits as they shouted at the passing trade:

'Come and buy my old Pop clothes!'

'Come and buy my old Pop songs!'

The stalls were similar to the ones you get when you go to a conference, or when you go to a carnival. Some of the traders were having a laugh, others were the seasonable types that like to set their stalls out everywhere, so that they can shout:

'Come and buy my sweets!'

'Come and buy my toys!'

As we walked by the night vendors we came upon the sign:
THE MUSCLE MAN.

And there he was right in front of our eyes: a man in a pair of tiger trunks applying baby lotion all over his body. The man would take time to shout at the passing trade, 'Get your high protein biscuits here!'

Inside the muscle man's stall sat a dwarf, drinking what looked like cocoa, and chewing on one of the high protein biscuits.

'The muscle man sells good biscuits!' shouted the wee man.

It was obvious they were great pals and, in-between the groans and shouts, they both smiled at each other. Then without warning the dwarf, after finishing a high protein biscuit, leaped

from his seat and jumped onto the muscle man's back, shouting, 'Yahoo, tiger trunks!'

The muscle man with comparative ease pulled him round over his shoulder. Then he said in a loud voice, 'Aha, there you are, yah wee so-and-so.'

Just as we were about to leave the muscle man's stall he came forward, dropping the dwarf gently onto the floor, and he stood staring at us. After a few silent seconds the muscle man pushed his sexless body out, and in a strange childlike voice he said, 'Why not buy some of my high protein biscuits, Silent Faces.'

Ian, who was right in front of him, replied, 'No thanks,' then began to walk away.

The muscle man, however, started to get angry, and he shouted at my Silent Face friend, Ian, 'You should take some weight training Silent man - that's what you should do!'

Ian turned round and, when the muscle man's voice had ended, he replied, 'And you should save your soul!'

This stunned the muscle man, but it made the dwarf laugh like a mad woman.

'Keep quiet!' shouted the man in the tiger trunks.

As the dwarf laughed the muscle man walked back into the middle of his stall, and standing there he belched into the night air. An elderly couple, passing by at this point, looked worried, for the man in the tiger trunks started shouting as mad as a hatter. 'Get your high protein biscuits here!'

The elderly couple with eyes wide and faces out of sorts decided to move quickly along. 'I've never seen anything like it in my life. The man is completely off his head,' said the elderly woman.

A guitarist had set himself up in the precinct. The sign above his stall simply read: **POPULAR MUSIC.**

And as he sang his song wonder filled the night sky, while images of love and fun, and messages of bliss and dance flowed through the artist's will.

We stayed and listened to the song that the man with the long dark hair had composed specially for the Festival, and when he

had finished singing the young man smiled at us like a true artist, as the notes echoed to end.

Up a little further another Pop poet had taken a stall and painted the words: LOVE POEMS all over the place. And as we approached him, he started to sing one of his poems:

And as time goes by, I hope you realise that only love has a way, I see in your eyes, no hope but some surprise when I tell you I'll take you out somewhere. Let's dance the night away, I'll sing and you can sway, tomorrow is faraway hey, hey.

We'll watch the crowds go by, and see the strange designs, and how the shadows just fade; for words are endless thoughts, and dreams are all you've got, when the music just fades away. Let's dance the night away, I'll sing and you can sway, tomorrow is far away, hey hey..

The Pop poet then clapped his hands, and not long after this he picked up his guitar again. Then he sang another love song to the Festival folk, who had gathered in front of his stall:

I'll write your name across the sky, it's crazy, but I know why, I'm not afraid I'll do anything to make a dark world bright. And catch the thoughts in my eyes, but you know they can't disguise you're beautiful, I'll do anything, you know what love is like; the moon and stars up in the sky, they cast a spell into your mind.

One day of life when no-one seems to laugh, One day of life we'll take some photographs, One day of life I'll show you shooting stars,, so faraway..

Someone must have thought it a good idea to set a stall out next to the light bites selling colourful Pop pictures: giant posters, some original, and some slightly torn and faded, could all be bought from the man in the college scarf, 'Roll up, roll up!' he shouted. 'Get your original Pop pictures here!'

Also on sale, inside a glass counter at the front of his stall, were badges. The badges ranged from the large to the tiny, and

when it was my turn to glide over the glass counter, I read the writing on two of them.

MODERN LOVE IS NOT WORTH A XXXX
DO YOU LIKE ME?

And you know I think I would have bought one of them if the price had been right, but extravagance made me think again. However, I moved to where messages of love and goodwill, inside what looked like greeting cards were all hanging.

After a few minutes Brian came over to look at the cards, and his first comment was, 'Strange.'

He then danced his head from side to side, as if to shake off the influence of the old Pop generation. At that moment the jolly assistant in the college scarf came forward, and smiled. Then he said in a nice voice, 'Why not get your Pop posters' and pictures' here, Silent Faces.'

Brian smiled back at him. Then the two of them chatted about the price of things during Pop times. 'This poster here would have probably went for about five or six pounds,' said the man in the college scarf, as he pointed at a poster of a Pop star from the New Romantic era.

It was good to see the traders enjoying themselves on Pop Festival night. Their stalls looked good. Some of them sold jewellery from the Pop era, and some of them sold magazines and paperback books. The majority of them, however, sold old-fashioned Pop vinyl records and cassettes. The only one that had me baffled was the chap at the top of the hill. On first impression he didn't seem to sell very much - he had one or two drawings displayed, that was all. His sign was very strange indeed: THE AESTHETIC MOVEMENT.

'Have you heard of them?' I asked Ian, as we all walked up the little hill towards his stall.

Ian, as we approached, examined the sign above the counter for a moment. Then he replied as if he had all the knowledge of the past at his fingertips. 'Oh, it was a nineteen century movement - art for art's sake - that sort of thing.'

When he had finished speaking I picked up a small painting from the counter, but I never looked at it; instead I wondered what these aesthetes were all about. Who was financing them? Were they about to make a comeback?

These questions troubled me for a time, and I got quite carried away when I saw the longhaired bedraggled aesthete walk around his stall. I tell you this man watched a sleepy world. The present world was of little interest to him. The world I think he inhabited was one where the fish were men, and the women exotic creatures from the seabed. And as he walked he openly smoked the pop drug marijuana - known as wacky baccy to the art world. This man did not care who bought, or looked at his art. He was to quote a Pop art phrase - completely out of it.

Presently, we walked by his stall and stood under the street lamps, and there Ian had a little go at the philosophy of art for art's sake. 'Art went mad in Pop times. Did you see that man puffing on the Pop drug?' Ian said, in his leader of the pack voice.

When I looked back for our art friend he had disappeared, but his assistant - a pretty young thing - came out from behind the viridian coloured curtains. With great care and delicacy she started to handle the objet d'art. She must have noticed me staring at her; for she looked over in the direction where I was standing. Then she spoke in a dream like voice. 'Hello, Silent Face, would you like to buy my Pop art.'

Ian, who was usually very exact about detail and social graces, ignored the pretty young thing with the long black Chinese hair, and left me to say to her, 'No thanks.'

However, as I walked towards her, watching her eyes move from me to the art she was dusting, I thought Miss Aesthete quite lovely, you know, in her black velvet dress and diamond brooch. And when I got there we chatted for a time about paintings, poetry, and strangely enough football, 'They don't half know how

to throw you these aesthetes,' I said to myself, when I finally walked back to my Silent Face friends.

Someone must have thought it a good idea to set up a transmission of old-fashioned Pop videos in the courtyard - next to the bank and the health food shop.

'Who wants to go and see a Pop video?' said Ian, like a father teasing little children.

'Oh, yes, can we,' said Cathy, pulling at his arm.

And we soon slipped behind the screen that someone had erected to keep out un-paying eyes.

* * *

The Pop video

...Flickery flipperty bip bop, then a man with a sword stood in a field, next the bass and drums appeared in the right hand part of the screen. Dancers then led your eyes to a Pop party where people, dressed in the latest Pop clothes and evening suits, were dancing. Everything swayed, got quicker, and just like a short film every frame brought you closer and closer to the meaning of the plot, and just when you thought you were there, the whole thing changed, and you were thrown into a land of fantasy, where the meaning was moral - but could take a life time to understand - so said the video man. The video ended with a typical Pop setting within a city, with a band on a roof garden playing their instruments of guitars, drums and keyboard. Then a stairway appeared like a stream and flowed into an expensive home. The chorus faded for the last time, then it was over - blank went the screen.

* * *

A strange old man who was dressed up in what can only be described as a cross between a punk rocker and a city slicker,

danced up to us holding a bowler hat in his hand. The man spoke with a travelling sort of accent, 'Okay, dudes, if you want to see another fantastic Pop video you can buy a ticket here, I take dollars, Deutschmarks and yen, you know!'

We decided, as we looked at each other, that one fantastic video was quite enough, thanks very much. And we left the video tent as the man, dressed up as a city slicker punk, shouted, 'Okay, dudes, next Pop video in five minutes - I take dollars, Deutschmarks, and yen, you know!'

Back on the street we watched a smart man walk by in the classic Pop outfit. He was probably heading for one of the all-night discotheques down town. This man still turned the heads of the girls as he walked by them. He was an elderly self-conscious sort of man, and as he got nearer and nearer to our Silent Faces, I could see that the outfit he wore was the real McCoy. The style that had not only launched the Pop world, but a thousand videos too, the like we had never seen. The classic Pop image: leather jacket, blue American denims, and a tee shirt, and big shoes. And as he headed for the underground station he brought out a brush and drew it through his perfect period hairstyle.

'Oh, Wow!' shouted Clare, who laughed without shame at the Pop man.

At the top of the precinct there was quite a crowd gathering for tonight's speakers. 'Let's go and see who is speaking,' suggested Brian.

Ian agreed and we shouted to the girls - who had started to move off in another direction - to come over.

'Clare, Cathy, let's go and see who's speaking tonight!' cried Brian. 'Hurry up! We will miss them!'

When the girls rejoined us Cathy pointed at the poster on a shop wall close by, that had all the information on it, 'Look,' she said.

POP FESTIVAL SPEAKERS

Professor John Stern:
Specialist in Pop culture

Ford Morris: Pop politician
(Time of the first speaker
around midnight)

And how fitting it was that on the anniversary of the old Pop world we should have two eminent Pop people to listen to. Once inside the crowd the atmosphere came and built, and expectancy made people clap and sing hymns:

Abide with me: fast falls the eventide; The darkness deepens; Lord, with me abide: When other helpers fail, and comforts flee, Help of the helpless, O abide with me. (Henry Francis Lyte 1793-1847)

Fascinated by the figures who were getting ready to speak Clare, who had been singing along, said to me, 'Look, Lawrence, these men look half-dead.'

This unkind comment probed my understanding of the night and the speakers; and as Clare brought her face to mirror mine she stared in wonderment - a stare that she had no doubt perfected from other mirrors. Then she said, 'Lawrence, have you ever thought about all the people who must have once walked these streets who are no longer here?'

At this point, she moved her eyes to emphasise the image she wanted to portray with some of the passengers moving by her.

Feeling in a good mood I decided to say the first thing that came into my head, 'As far as you are concerned, Clare, the dead are living and the living dead.'

This statement made her take a controlled swipe at me and, with irritation written all over her face, she hit back, 'You know what I mean, Lawrence.'

As I retreated a little nearer Cathy and Ian, I said, 'Yes,' slowly. 'Come on hurry up, philosopher!' someone shouted.

Ian and Cathy both laughed. Then we all looked towards the stage. Not long after this the lights came on, and a well-orchestrated show started.

The first speaker
Mr John Stern

'Good evening, my name is John Stern, and I am a New Age philosopher. This is the first time that I have spoken in Glasgow, but it is not the first time I have visited your fine city. I have been here on many occasions, and hopefully I will have the opportunity of returning sometime after our tour ends.'

'We hope to be visiting every city in Europe on our tour; but tonight is the starting point, and I would like right away to thank you for all coming along especially on such a cold night.'

'As you know, in the early 1960's, the pistol shot that started Pop was fired by one of the greatest writers the world has ever known.'

'The author may have been dead and buried when his book was on trial, but the impact was to be felt all over the world; he was not able to see the crowds of people running from the courtroom shouting: We have a new dream!'

'However, I am sure if he were there he would have told them that they were running in the wrong direction. He would have said I am sure, look you are on the road to nowhere. He would have told them to put away their banners of decay: for it would only lead to permissive ways. He would have told them to look at each other and to seek out the mystery of love in life. The author, I am sure, would have warned them about the intellectuals who would come and do anything for the love of money. And he would have warned them not to turn out literature and films advocating the worship of false gods.'

'The reason New Age philosophy came into being is not only to educate humans on how to live better lives, but also to show them the mistakes made by the old Pop culture. You see for forty years a

fashion, derived in the main from commercial products, held the masses together.'

'I was very much around in Pop times and I would like to help you understand this period.'

'As we are all aware, today is the anniversary of the end of the Pop world, and I would like if I can to take you back to the days of Popular culture.'

'Look at it this way what happens when you take a wrong turning? Will not all sorts of things happen to you, before you find your way back onto the right path.'

'There were great periods of stability during the Pop era, and there was also great art. You can see this for yourself. The museums are full of Pop memorabilia; I believe, however, the greatest art was in music. And I still to this day have a great affection for the period they call the golden era. But I tell you as I stand here, I can remember it was a strange feeling when the wind seemed to whirl around our feet as we entered the cul-de-sac of Pop. Everyone knew that it was the end of an era.'

'Looking back towards the start, I am sure the flow of man's conscience was towards the love of man. Everything was new and vibrant. But the great mistake Pop people made was that they forgot that a society is only as good as its foundation, and if that foundation is not Christian, it will rot.'

'Many of you must wonder why towards the end of the Pop world people followed the movement, known in some quarters, as the Grudgers. The Grudgers declared that life had no meaning. They believed in no transcendental reality, and they advocated that if man wanted to get anywhere in life, he had to push his fellow man out of the way.'

'In that time Pop culture had no understanding: it had lost its meaning, and of course this was brought to a head by the last Pop star: Pax Vobiscum.'

'Like all cultures the Pop era had its highs and lows; and like all things it finally had to come to an end. Oh, yes there were great things in Pop times, but one was not the understanding between the sexes. I think it was in the early days of the new culture that

female writers started to urge women to lead a Pop life. Unfortunately, the models they chose leaned towards the Grudgers, rather than to Christian men, and of course this led to great unhappiness in society.'

'It is worth pointing out at this point that the divorce rate was at an all time high during Pop times. There was to put it bluntly no communion between the sexes. There was no consensus either about work, or the right to work. People felt that the country would be better off with millionaires calling the shots, even though the millionaires put millions out of work.'

'It is very important for myself and my friends to go on tours like this, and speak about the past in the hope that you will benefit from our experiences.'

'Free spirits I call on you to run with the power of love, run from deception. The lover of weakness is always hard on your heels. Do not be afraid: for you will always see the cross stirring at every crisis point.'

'As you can see I am a little older than you, but I feel that life is worth living at any stage. I call on you to stretch out your hands to each other and to live life to the full, struggle, compete, laugh and cry, and above all things put your trust in your Saviour Christ - thank you.'

The crowds cheered and the second speaker appeared at the microphone.

The second speaker
Mr Ford Morris

'Good evening, I would like to speak to you about politics during the Pop period.'

'You will be well aware that it was this government who abolished the motorcar. The machine that spewed out fumes for more than a hundred years, we phased out in less than a decade.'

‘Future generations, I believe, will see the motorcar as one of the most bizarre transport systems ever invented.’

‘And it was only after countless humans had lost their lives, and towns and countries had been structurally destroyed, that we finally rid ourselves of the machine that people had become so obsessed with in Pop times that they would not even walk to the corner shop without taking it along.’

‘I am always reminded of the car by my little girl who, on first seeing them inside the museum, one day asked my wife, “Mummy, who are all the dressed up dwarfs in the limousines?”’

‘It is important to remember that it was this government who led the way to a new transport system. It was our political skill, courage, and belief that brought about this change; and we hope that countries all over the world will soon follow our good example.’

‘I can see from where I am standing a magnificent magnetic train gliding through the night, that links up with underground stations, before finally travelling out to the suburbs.’

‘Do you know there are still more countries in the world with the old motor system than the new one. However, we hope that the change has begun, and that soon all countries who are interested in a pollution free transport system will eventually decide to follow our good example and adopt a pollution free transport system.’

‘As you know Britain had a great leader, during Pop times, someone who advanced the dream of enterprise and wealth creation; and although it was not my political colours, I understood and admired the political skill that it took to carry this through.’

‘There were clearly many things achieved in Pop times, and some say a nation transferred itself from slumber to action during those heady days. Some on the other hand thought that a great division of wealth took place, and that while a certain section of society sipped champagne, another section was clearly forgotten about.’

‘However, all I can say is that thank God it was our prime minister who showed the way out of the political madness. Yes, many years ago it was our prime minister who put forward the idea that drew

us away from the decay that had set in at the end of the Pop world. And I am sure that I don't have to remind you that we now have a higher standard of living than at any other time since the early 1960's.'

'The barometer may be art, and if anyone doubts what I am saying, then I suggest that they look around them and see the wonderful things that we have built. And all the old Poppers can do is dance backwards and out of time.'

'No longer is it important to live in a world of mass media, mass communication. And let me say this to anyone who has ears to hear, we shall go on building and building till our society is one of the greatest this world has ever seen.'

'We believe in the right to work, the right to a job, the right to have a house, the right to live - that is what we are all about.'

'Thank you for coming along this evening and taking the time to listen to our speeches, and I hope you enjoy the Festival of Pop, tonight, thank you.'

'God bless you.'

Through the cheering crowd I watched the travelling party, as the elderly women put their arms around the old men.

Brian gave a nod to Ian that years of experience would have recognised. Then we made our way through the cheering crowd, and searched for an opening and, strange as it sounds, we came out at where we had come in - only this time the statue in the main square was full of posters conveying the latest love craze to the masses. The late night billposter people had once more been round. They too wanted to spread their dreams around society.

COME TO
CLUB CARESS
WHERE LOVE IS FREE

5 Party People

The church bells signalled the midnight hour as we all crossed the street in search of our very own Pop party. Brian thought it a good idea if we stopped off at an all-night superstore, where they sold drink, just off Ingram Street.

‘It’s over there!’ he shouted, as he pointed through the Festival crowd.

Clare outside the off-sales started to take control of the situation, ‘Right, Lawrence, you and Brian go in and get the drinks. Now get three bottles of wine - anything that looks reasonable - a dozen cans of lager. Oh, and don’t forget to get some soft drinks for Ian. Right on you go, then.’

It is a well known fact all over the world that the late night oxygen tents for mice and men can be dangerous places around midnight, so Brian and I had our wits about us as we entered the late night store where they sold alcohol.

Inside the store that beamed brilliantly we were surrounded by the colours of every illusion: bottles of sherry, whisky, cognac and vodka - to name but a few.

Brian picked up a basket and immediately started dropping some cans and bottles into it. Within five minutes we seemed organised, and we headed for the cash machine.

‘Right next!’ shouted a young assistant, who was reading a magazine titled: Money Myths and Men.

With one hand she placed the drinks in a scanner, and with the other she turned another page of her magazine. When everything was scanned she said in an American accent, ‘Oh, thank’ee, sir. Now be sure to call again at the late night drink store, won’t you.’

Brian smiled at the young assistant, and then he asked her in an excited voice, ‘Are you going to a Pop party later?’

The assistant, who was young and dressed in a black and white staff outfit, looked up from her magazine. Then she replied lazily, ‘Oh, I don’t get finished till about four in the morning, Silent Face, so I guess I’ll have to miss the Festival for another year.’

Brian in his usual way then told her that we were all going to a Pop party at Cathedral Street. Then we all made our way out of the late night drink store, never seeing or hearing any of the things that are said to go on there after midnight - thank God.

In the drizzle of Ingram Street Ian, Cathy, and Clare stood with Silent Faces, but oh boy when they saw Brian and I approach with the cargo in hand they all cheered.

‘Well-done, Silent Faces,’ said Cathy, laughing.

Cathy all of a sudden felt like the leader of the pack, and she took it upon herself to indicate the direction of the Pop party. She said, ‘This way,’ in a commanding voice.

So weaving through the Pop party people, who for some reason seemed to be all heading in the same direction as we were, we followed her towards the north end of the city. About five minutes later Clare looking a little worried asked Brian what the address of the Pop party was.

Brian searched his pockets, and acted out a little panic - beating his hands all down the front of his biblical robe. Then suddenly like a magician he produced a crumbled piece of paper that someone had given to him in the Silent Bar, that night.

Brian said in a dramatic voice, ‘713 Cathedral Street.’ Then he turned to Ian and, with a blank look on his Silent Face, he asked him, ‘Do you know where that is?’

‘It’s at the end of the street,’ rejoined Ian, laughing a little, as his eyes searched the many buildings under the Glasgow skyline.

Brian to everyone’s annoyance gave the impression that it was just a case of acting sensible and 713 would appear.

However, as we walked on suddenly out of the night came two figures who blocked our path. ‘Oh, hello lad, the night is lovely,’ said the man nearest to me.

After the riddle and tone of his voice had died away, the strange man moved his eyes and surveyed us like someone assessing the opposition before attack.

Clare and Cathy wisely retreated a little behind the menfolk; the next move came when the strange man pointed a finger to the ground, then he quickly brought it up again and directed it at me. ‘Oh, never look down son, or you’ll feel the might of this,’ he said, as he clenched his fist tight.

More strange words of warning followed, then he watched a Festival girl dance across the street. The man on receipt of the dancing image started to imitate her. However, the girl on receipt of her image started to move away, holding onto her boyfriend for protection.

The down-and-out dancer looked about fifty and wore clothes that you associate with the charity shops in the city. Presently, his friend came into view and although slightly older than the dancer, he gave the impression that he was a reasonable man. And as he moved heavy and sad along the street, wanting to get on his way, I noticed that the only thing that questioned his appearance was a thin scar on his right cheek.

As the man walked by me he said, in a mixture of movements and looks, that he could never understand the dancer and why he wasted so much energy annoying the public. I could see, however, they both needed each other badly. The dancer the hard man ready for trouble at any time, “Are you looking for trouble, because trouble is looking for you,” he said laughing.

On the other hand his friend seemed quiet, a sensible sort in the circle of down-and-outs, where I imagined the code of behaviour to be strict. The two men I thought would get on well

together in their wanderings, but my heart told me that the sad man would be better off on his own; for the simple reason the dancer was unpredictable and could kill at any moment.

The dancer at last moved out of the way, and began to follow his mate down the road. It was at this point that I noticed that he too had a thin scar on his right cheek; as he went by me the dancer held up his arms and said to his sad looking friend, 'I'll never kill, anyone, will I.'

'Oh, come on, get down the road,' replied his sad looking friend.

'How do these men gravitate?' I wondered to myself.

And when I looked back for the answer a human instinct told me that they needed to be together. They were opposite down-and-outs, that's all there was to it.

Just when it seemed the episode was over Ian, our bold Silent Face friend, shouted to the dancer in a loud and angry voice, 'Hey, *Barbone! Barbone!*'

To this shout the dancer turned round and made his way towards Ian with his head down, as if searching the pavement. And with quick little steps that would have been funny if the situation had not been so serious, he arrived in front of Ian.

The down-and-out dancer repeated the call, 'Oh, *Barbone, Barbone,*' back to Ian, in a strange tone.

Ian straightened his face and, in dramatic courtroom pose, he said, 'Have you ever spilt the blood of man, *Barbone?* Have you ever taken a life, *Barbone?* Tell me, tell me now!'

Although, the dancer's face became bemused, he still looked ready for battle; his eyes opened wide and his facial muscles tightened. Thankfully, however, the strength of Ian's character made him change. The dancer dropped his arms to his side, and with open palms he acknowledged bewilderment to the dark sky as if someone looked down on him from above.

Ian may not have been as strong as the down-and-out dancer, but I was sure he was quicker in every other way; and if Ian's purpose was to make the man stand in front of us a fool - then he had succeeded.

With anger and authority in his voice Ian told the man to get out of his way. The dancer agreed although he said that one day he would return. He then with some alacrity walked away to rejoin his mate, and we watched the two of them head for the city like gravediggers.

‘You’re an awful man, Ian,’ said Cathy, as she took his hand and cuddled up to him.

Everyone laughed, I think more in relief than anything else, and as we searched the numbers once more along Cathedral Street, Clare cried, ‘Where’s this damn party! We are only at number 421.’

Brian ignored this and he turned to Ian and said, ‘He was really wild. Did you see those crazy eyes?’

Clare, quick as ever, replied, ‘Well, Brian, why don’t you go back and invite him to the Pop party, then.’

‘Oh, I’d love to see their faces,’ said Cathy, laughing at the thought of a down-and-out dancer at a Pop party.

As we went farther and farther from the city fewer and fewer folk could be seen, and we all tried to estimate where 713 would be in the long tenement row.

Brian again checked the invitation that had been written a few hours ago by a Silent soul in a Silent Bar. He stopped and gazed once more at the tenement sky, where chimneys stood like sentries. Then suddenly a shout came out of the night from the direction of the redundant train depot, ‘Brian!’

Brian hearing his name immediately shouted back, ‘Hello, who’s that!’

He then turned to Ian and said, ‘I wonder who that can be.’

As we approached each other the figures revealed themselves to be two girls and a young man. They were all dressed up in the fancy Pop style; and although incognito, I recognised them as well known faces from the Silent scene.

Stephen greeted Brian as if the two men were in the Antarctic, and had been wandering for days.

‘Great to see you,’ said Stephen, shaking his hand.

The conversation that followed was light and had all the hallmarks of men who had no idea about each other.

Grabbing his arm Stephen asked Brian, 'Where's your Pop clothes, my man?'

'Oh, we didn't bother dressing up this year,' Brian said a little embarrassed.

Then strange as it sounds Brian started to act as if we had all met in some other life. However, after a few moments of meaningless chat, Brian got around to asking Stephen where the Pop party was.

'There it is,' said Stephen, pointing to the last flat in the long tenement row.

Being beside Brian and Stephen, as we walked towards the building, I was witness to some of the patter that can sometimes take place on Festival nights. Stephen talked about men from other planets coming down to earth on Pop Festival night, and hiding in fancy dress uniforms, so as to understand humans more. Brian on the other hand spoke about some strange liquid that could make men better lovers, astralholics or something like that.

Meanwhile, the runaway looking girls were talking about what might be in store for them at the Pop party.

'I think there's going to be something special at the Pop party tonight,' said the blonde to the brunette.

'Yes, they have been writing plays' for the New Age Theatre Company,' replied the brunette, to the blonde.

713 Cathedral Street soon appeared and Brian without hesitation pressed the intercom, and right away a voice came bearing words, 'Come on up Poppers and Silent Faces, we're having a Pop party.'

Inside a close where the signs of artists and fashion louts lay around every door, we ran up three flights of stairs, as the echo thundered off the wally walls. When we got there Ian pressed the doorbell and within seconds the door opened, and there stood an attractive young lady in a dreamlike ball gown, in front of a backdrop of boozy red faces.

'Come in,' she said, waving a cigarette.

This was a strange invitation, for the simple reason the place was so busy, and I wondered if we could all get in. I also noticed that a lot of folk had taken the time to dress up in the old-fashioned fancy Pop style. However, quite a few of the guests had come in evening suits, but so far we were the only ones to have arrived in biblical robes. It was all a great fuss, you know, with people shouting and laughing at each other; and I must say the possibilities seemed endless for the sardine party Pop people, and it made me wonder if they were all going to be famous and this was the reason for the party. In the middle of the crowd I was introduced to a young lady. She had just popped her head between Clare and Cathy. It was the same young lady who had opened the door, but this time - without the presence of the ball gown - she had sadly metamorphosed to ordinary.

‘Hi!’ she screamed. Then she added, ‘Oh, I’m so glad to get back into the sardine position.’

Just then a man caught her eye and she turned on a sixpence and said to him, ‘It’s awfully nice to see you again. Are you enjoying the sardine Pop party? Haw haw.’

‘Come on let’s see what is happening in the kitchen,’ said the bold Clare full of adventure.

And somehow we managed to lay down our cargo of drinks near to the sink, and there we watched the people around us paint themselves in famous colours of enjoyment.

‘Some party, eh,’ said Brian, with a nudge.

The party was certainly in full flight now. Many people were singing and dancing to the old Pop tunes being piped through from the other room.

‘Isn’t it funny how the best parties are always in the kitchen,’ said Cathy, to Ian, before a kiss.

A little later I heard my name ring out as if it were part of the playing song: ‘Lawrence! Lawrence! Lawrence!’

And presently through the kitchen came a staggering man - it was a workmate of Ian’s from the newspaper office - and seeing him in this condition, I wondered if he was going to make it over to our corner.

When he finally arrived he stood with eyes rolling about inside a tilted head, 'Absolutely drunk, big man,' he slurred.

'I'm a Neanderthal man all right, a drunken Neanderthal man,' he repeated, as his funny face looked at Cathy.

Ian looked at him, but he did not greet him; instead he fascinated himself with his new love, and all the delights that love can bring.

Needless to say, the Neanderthal man soon caught an illusion, or friendly image from somewhere else, and duly staggered towards it, negotiating the Pop party people like a lunatic in a field of nettles.

Clare poured some red wine into a glass and started to get us all going in the great game of drink and chat and the art of balance. She said, 'Thank God, he's gone.' then added, 'now has anyone been to that new place they call...'

Nobody knew Andrew he just appeared at our plot, next to the sink, and started to take advantage of the goodly supply of wine, next to ours. He asked in an outrageous manner, 'Whose party is it anyway?'

After about two glasses of wine he turned to me and, like a man involved in a world of spies, he said, 'There's a lot of the old class in tonight, you know.' Then after a pause he added, 'Oh and by the way, do you know what the definition of revolution is?'

This question intrigued me, and as I thought about it I could not help but think that even though this man had on fancy Pop clothes, he looked like a Mormon. The man with the pale blue eyes and outdoor complexion was very different indeed.

Not bothering to wait for my answer, he said, 'Nobody knows.' Then he added, 'But we know when it is over, don't we.'

There was a long pause after this, and I could see that his answer had pleased him. As he contemplated wisdom and no doubt many other things, he brought out an old-fashioned plain cigarette, and drew a finger along it.

It was not long after this that he added to his understanding of societies. 'Well, I think it must be when the advertising

companies start to plaster the walls, with the message of the revolution, to help them sell their products.'

The essence had hardly left his mouth when he added, 'You see, they draw it up in a different style from what the norm is, and they make it acceptable to the masses, from where it originally came. Never let the light in on magic, young man - that's the secret.'

After another intriguing statement about society he gazed towards the centre of the room, where young advertising types were standing - themselves dressed in drag - then he was gone.

'Is their anymore wine left,' Brian asked, when he arrived back from some outward Pop party adventure.

Cathy responded right away by pouring Brian a glass of red wine, and she smiled at him with all the delicacy of one in love with life. Then she turned to me and said, 'When is a revolution over Lawrence?' as if the question was a party trick.

But the question came back to me again and again, and I wondered if it was as the Mormon man had said. Was it really about the resale of culture back to the masses from the moneymakers? Could it be true that the Pop world was at one time the idea of a small group of people? And over a period of time that idea grew into a culture ready to challenge the ruling class? And was it also true that Pop had become so successful that the politicians had conformed to it, as well as the money markets, intellectuals, and economists? It was so hard, yet so simple, to see how a book, like the one the philosopher had talked about outside the library, could spark a new culture - even if it was a distortion of what the writer had originally intended. I guess the only movement outside the influence of art, in the days of my Silent Face, is the movement who go by the name of the Grudgers, and whose banners read: 'Nothing is worthwhile.' For no economist, or money market man, can ever make anything from nihilism, I thought to myself.

Just then someone in fancy dress shouted from the middle of the kitchen, 'Drink up and let's all celebrate the old Pop world!' and everyone raised a glass.

The wealth of a nation must somehow depend on the success of the product maker back to the customer, I concluded.

‘More wine, Lawrence,’ asked Clare, looking at me anxiously.

‘Sorry,’ I said, ‘I was thinking about something that Mormon looking man had said.’

‘Oh,’ she said.

Clare poured a little more wine into my glass and looked at me as if she understood every weakness a man has.

‘Interesting, was it.’

At that moment, Brian came over to me and, as if in orbit around an unreal world, he started to colour the darker shades of life with fantastic statements, ‘Great party - what a great Pop party.’

Then he suddenly stopped and stared like a man who has just seen his own destiny fly by him. ‘Look at that beautiful girl.’ Then he added as if in a dream, ‘I bet you, she is a star.’

The starlet was wearing a tight midnight blu Pop dress and was over in the corner chatting to a friend, as if there was a film crew recording the great moment. Ian must have felt Brian’s interest grow to a dangerous level and - like the director he is - he signalled to the young lady to come over.

And this is how it went: ‘I haven’t seen you for sometime,’ said the bold Ian.

‘Oh, I’ve been around,’ answered the young lady, from the imaginary film set.

‘You know, you’re looking absolutely fantastic...’

And she certainly was wonderful, and I couldn’t understand why from a distance she seemed so full of pretence. With soft spoken words she talked to Ian about fashion, and forgot all about everyone around her. I tell you undercover this young lady was - way out of bounds. She smiled at me, but to be honest I don’t think she saw any of us, and it may well have been the case that she hid behind that vain mirror called fear.

Ian tried to protect her from the disco dancing Brian, who by this time had started to mumble words like, ‘Great Pop party, yea, yea, great Pop party, yea, yea...’

The next piece of theatre came when suddenly the Pop party was interrupted by screams and swear words.

‘Leave me alone you booze bag! Leave me alone!’

Everyone in the kitchen immediately searched for the victim, and within minutes a woman was seen being carried out by a man, who it must be said, had not missed too many meals in his life. The angry woman, who looked as if she had been drinking all day and had worries like no one, kicked and screamed all the way to the kitchen door.

‘Let me go, you idiot! Let me go!’

The arrest and departure of the woman brought a silence to the once happy kitchen, and I must say most folk felt sorry for her; but she was dumped outside under a cold night sky, nevertheless.

One or two Grudgers, in amongst the Pop party people, could be heard saying: ‘She came from nothing, you know.’

‘Yes, I know, you don’t know where they come from, these days, do you.’

The grudging voices thankfully faded, and a man standing next to me, full of universal wisdom, said, ‘It doesn’t take long for the voices’ of fun to return - just you wait and see Silent Face.’

And he was right. It was just about five minutes after the kicking and screaming session that a man walked into the kitchen and announced to the assembled folk that he and his fiancée would like to invite us all through to the living room. He put it boldly: ‘Where The New Age Theatre Company will perform, for you, their latest play.’

Ian and I were the last to enter into the makeshift theatre room, where another announcement greeted us. A cheery-faced girl said, ‘Good evening Poppers and Silent Faces, I hope you are all having a good time. The New Age Theatre Company, of which my fiancé is the director, would like to put on a play for you titled: Broken Love.’

Everyone in the room then stared at the two young men who were holding a flimsy sheet, illuminated by a bright light, and when the cheery-faced girl stopped speaking, two naked figures - one female the other male - slipped behind the sheet. The main

light went off and someone near the front shouted the title again Broken Love! and the silhouettes spoke:

Man: Is there no way back from this hell.

Woman: No, David, once these pieces are broken they can never be put back together again - it is best forgotten about.

Man: But how can I forget?

Woman: You know that it is from within that the pain comes. Well, you will just have to endure it till you die - you must be brought to heel.

Man: I am no dog.

Woman: I know darling, but I can't do anything about it. You see this room, you see how it holds all the objects, and how everything seems natural - well I have asked myself a thousand times, but I can't hold you. It best be left this way.

At this point, the woman picked up a flute and played a medieval tune. The man dropped to the ground crying. The music swayed. Then the couple slipped away and dressed themselves. After the play Broken Love the director came forward with his fiancée and received the applause. The young ladies at the front of the crowd became quite excited and clapped way beyond everyone else.

Mr Director walked with a swagger, as if he had just won the jackpot lottery. He said a few words of thanks to the assembled folks. Then he went straight to his fans at the front of the stage, and there I think they held a secret meeting about make-up and the like.

When Ian and I arrived back into the kitchen we laughed at the play Broken Love.

'It will baffle the English student - that's for sure,' Ian said, to me, while pouring himself a soft drink.

We all resumed much in the same order as before, Clare next to Brian and Ian, and Cathy and I, next to the kitchen sink. However, everyone else - just like in old-fashioned dancing - had decided to change positions and partners, and it was noticeable

that Cathy and Clare were unusually quiet on their return from the theatre. Clare finally broke the silence, she said to Brian in a most condescending way: 'Now darling, did you like it?'

Counting the time on his watch face, Brian muttered, 'It was all right, I suppose.'

I don't think it was in Brian's interest to comment about plays, their meaning, their social implication, and so on. I think he thought things were just things, and should not be investigated beyond their earthly appearance and value.

Clare shouted at him, 'Brian you're ignorant!'

Poor Brian could only parry the punch from the fair hand, 'I said it was all right - didn't I.'

Clare laughed just like the little girl earlier on in the evening - the one who played with cassettes and videos - and like that little girl, I think Clare wanted to keep her boyfriends in cupboards, and bring them out at times of convenience. As the clock ticks there will surely be time for the man of knowledge and world affairs: 'Yes, now he can stay out for most of the day and entertain me with figures and facts. Next the business man: 'Well, let me see, yes, he can stay out for awhile, and smooth over any money matters. He is always available for meals and drinks - is the businessman.' However, when the good man came he frightened Clare and butterflies flew inside her: 'Why does this man want to know me? I don't understand...'

And as she stood there wondering about her power and why it failed, she went quite white, you know. It really was a little terrifying this thing called love. Deep down it may well have been the case that Clare wanted to make Brian a man of the arts, or to weaken him to the point where he was a man no longer. This of course is not to say that art is more female than male - more of a case that it was somehow against Brian's character, and so fair game for Clare to attack him. But when I thought of my Silent Face friend spotting the difference between Michelangelo and Botticelli from twenty-five feet, it did make me laugh.

'Botticelli pioneered the centralised pyramidal design. Did you know that, Lawrence?'

High above the Pop party heads, French dressed waiters arrived and started to distribute champagne, and it was not long till a tall studious man stood in front of me, saying with a little bow, 'Champagne sir.'

Everyone took one except Ian who, like John the Baptist, did not drink alcohol. It was at this point that Cathy enlightened us all about a strange fashion during Pop times. 'You're never going to believe this, but my gran told me that during the boom days of Pop a group of socialites started a movement and called themselves: the Exceedingly Generous Bunch. They went around drinking and merrymaking. They wanted to be philanthropists, and undertake all the duties of that trade. In fact, they say if you look out for them in the Silent scene, you can still see their children to this day following their example.'

Cathy then talked about a group who formed themselves as rivals against the Exceedingly Generous Bunch. 'They called themselves the Meddlers, and they would hold parties on the same nights as the other lot. However, it was not long before the Meddlers became drunken louts, and were thrown out of the fashion scene.' After a pause she added, 'There must have been a lot of funny people about in Pop times - don't you think.'

Cathy when she had finished speaking laughed like a schoolgirl, and then she took her first sip of champagne. 'I could get used to this, you know,' she said with a twinkle in her eye.

A little later Cathy smiled to Ian to come closer for love's protection, and Clare, feeling eclipsed, pressed her cheek against mine and whispered to me in a sexy voice, 'Lawrence make up a Pop poem and sing it to me.'

Fortunately, I remembered a bit of the song I had heard coming out of the office at the magnetic train station:

Your life is like a seesaw, but you're ready for the real world, with nothing to say that's kind. Doesn't matter if it's London, if it's Glasgow, or New York, you'll see death, and you'll see life.

And all the things that you crave for, and not just love, but you want danger, so take your time...

Clare laughed at the off the cuff Pop poem and, as she clinked my glass, she said, 'Aye you're a good turn Lawrence.'

A little later when more and more fancy dress Pop people arrived, a girl dressed in a hippie suit came into view over a shoulder that kept moving. We seemed to know each other, it was wonderfully strange; and when the opportunity fell she came forward to me bearing the words, 'Terrible party.'

'Oh it's not that bad,' I said, as I put my drink down beside hers.

And you know we got on so well that after about half an hour we decided to leave the Pop party, and go to an all-night old-fashioned discotheque, somewhere in the city.

'We're going dancing,' I said to my Silent Face friends.

So outside with my new-found friend we walked back towards the city centre and got to know each other, even though we both felt we knew each other when we first met - if you know what I mean.

Wondering if the clubs, that had turned themselves into old-fashioned discos for the night, were strict about what people should wear on Pop Festival night, I said to her, 'Will they let me in without Pop clothes on?'

With a smile she replied, 'You'll be all right, Silent Face. Tonight we're going to one of the original Pop places in town - and they let anyone in there.'

And so as we walked we talked about nothing, everything, and anything, which all seemed to be the same sort of thing. It wasn't until I asked this young lady what her name was that the rhythm changed.

'I have no name,' she said.

6 Disco Days

They say in the Silent scene, that at one time discos were famous all over the world. Apparently, the idea had started sometime in the 1960's, and it had somehow managed to keep going right up until the end of the Pop world. In fact, there are still one or two old Pop places left in town; however, there was a rumour going round that the last bastion of Pop: the club Disco Days, would soon be closing down, due to a lack of public interest.

Inside, Disco Days, where many fascinating faces had come for the last 60 odd years, I handed the disco girl money, and she gave me two tickets - as if we were going to the theatre.

Just then the sad manager, who was also the owner of Disco Days, came out of his office and wandered around. Seeing an original old Pop man standing at the cigarette machine, the manager went over and started a conversation with him, 'Oh, but the music was good in Disco Days, in its hey day - was it not?' I heard him say.

At the elevated bar in Disco Days you could quite easily see the dance floor where the Festival folk were now, dancing side by side, paying tribute to the music from the wonder era known as Pop. All over the club video recordings of famous Pop men and Pop women presented the fashion of the day through the medium

of the day. And just when I was thinking Pop an old man appeared with a white beard and eyes that said he was really a cosmic man from Havana or Nineveh. The old man stood in front of me at the bar. Then in a well-rehearsed disco conservation movement he started to shake himself. Nothing seemed to bother the cosmic man, and after a few shakes he went back to the dance floor singing a disco song.

Luckily, we managed to get served quickly at the 'Tinsel Bar' and just when we were about to leave, with drinks in hand, I suddenly remembered that one could buy Pop mufflers in old-fashioned nightclubs, because of the law passed by our new government: declaring that every loud establishment must have ear protection available for its customers. I raised my voice against the loud music and asked the girl with no name if she wanted a pair of Pop mufflers.

'You don't believe in that old wives' tale do you, Silent Face,' she said, tough as old boots.

Disco Days for some reason did not have any Pop mufflers in stock, and it soon became apparent that this was no place for the dialectics. In fact, it seemed more suited, in a strange sort of way, to our new generation and the people who call themselves Silent Faces, and who as you know do not talk while their favourite music is being played.

Right away you could see the form of the disco was different from all other leisure pursuits: first there was the dancers on the floor, then around them went a constant procession - just like at Mecca. Some of the women held hands, others acted out their favourite parts from Pop videos. But everywhere you looked, through the flashing lights, Pop people appeared. There were also, thank goodness, one or two Silent Faces in Disco Days who had not dressed up for this year's Pop Festival, and had come along in the everyday fashion of our new movement.

I had read in Pop times that the majority of people who frequented these nightspots spent many hours on their hair and elaborate costumes. In fact, even today there is still a great debate, in the Silent scene, about how women in Pop times neglected the

traditional female role and followed a male fashion. On the other hand, I had read that the men had borrowed a lot of female images. This fashion was popular in the era titled the theatrical time of Pop. Did men really wear make-up and perfume? It was all very strange indeed this thing called Pop. From up near the bar we watched the women dance together on the dance floor, as the good fun men came close with gyrating hip movements. All in all I must say it was a good atmosphere in Disco Days, with the music blazing from speaker to speaker from face to face.

After a time the girl with no name, and I, swayed through the crowd to a spot behind the marble pillars just in front of where the DJ worked. And right there in front of our very own eyes, surrounded by serpentine mirrors, lay a crowded dance floor where everyone was enjoying themselves.

The music I tell you was simply fantastic as it continued through the different era's of Pop. And it was even more amazing that in the frenzy and charge no one got hurt.

'Look, Lawrence, I can do the Pop dance,' said the girl with no name, as she danced in front of me.

So boys and girls this was our spot for the night, with the music and lights weaving love - and what love might be. And as the night went on more and more people came to the dance floor, and you know even though they were all part of the Pop thing they were all different: some danced, some smiled, and some just came to make others laugh.

Then quite unexpectedly the music dreamed away, and the midAtlantic voice of the DJ said: 'Good evening Pop Festival people, now it is time for competitions. Yes, that's right, Pop stars, it's time for competitions...'

The DJ then asked the contestants, who were wishing to enter the best dressed Pop star of the year award, to come forward to the dance floor.

The prizes, by the way, for this event were not to be laughed at: 'Yes, fabulous prizes to be won, a free weekend in the last Pop haven: the city of Amsterdam; and five hundred pairs of blue

jeans - yes, that's right, Pop people fabulous prizes to be won!' cried the DJ.

When they were ready the contestants took up their positions on the catwalk, and when the music started again, they all danced in what I can only describe as a washing-line way, and everyone around the dance floor clapped and tried to pick out who they thought looked the best dressed Pop star.

'I think it's him,' said the girl with no name, but plenty of ideas about Pop.

After the parade and prizes the announcer spoke again: 'May I introduce to you three bands that have at short notice agreed to play for you, tonight. The first group go by the name of Dung Fodder, and as you can see they are an old-fashioned punk band. The band dress in jackboots and jeans, and have their haircut spiky. They would like you to know that their songs against society are played as loud as they can, every Friday in the main square in the city centre.'

'The second band that you will hear go by the name of The Real McCoy, and they tell me that they have just finished recording cover versions of old Pop tunes, and they have a single coming out next week that is titled: Rat Face Millionaires. The line-up consists of an ex-Pop star, a Romany man, and Bertie Boom Boom on drums.'

'The third band - and I hope I have got this right - go by the name of Cow Girls. The girls say that they represent a Wild West ranch movement that was popular during the latter stages of Pop. Their favourite drink is scrumpy, and they tell me that they all want to get into movies and make western films for women.'

'Right, that's it Pop People. Would you please welcome DUNG FODDER!'

The announcer walked off the stage to wild cheers, as the band Dung Fodder struck up in wails and four letter words, that made the speakers rattle with disbelief.

One or two the Fodder fans danced the powwow, making their faces magical and maimed. And as the Fodder went on it was noticeable that their faces turned to a constipated look, although

one girl, dressed in the style of the punk band, was having a right time to herself. She was shouting at the strobes.

‘Yes, please, more Fodder, please!’

Beside me two photographic male models were trying to woo two passing disco girls. But it was obvious that their questions never hit the girls’ hearts, and the shudder of impoliteness was left temporarily on the men’s faces. After looking at each other they decided to disappear into the disco clouds.

Just then two ladies appeared dressed in bras and pants, one in blue and white stripes, and the other in black - sexy black. They stopped in front of me and looked up at the video screen, and for a time they watched, with no volume, a Pop artist portray the image of fame and fortune.

‘I could have been a Pop star,’ said the one in sexy black.

Her friend laughed, then the two turned and watched the live band playing.

It was at this point that a strange young woman came through the crowd and greeted the girl with no name.

‘Hi, I didn’t know you were coming tonight,’ said the strange young woman.

The two of them then huddled together like secret planners in some sort of artistic coup. The strange young woman wore an outfit that was popular during Pop times called the revolutionary look. And it came as no surprise to me when the girl with no name introduced her friend as Trotsky girl.

‘This is the best known agitator we women have in the city, these days,’ said the girl with no name.

Trotsky girl said nothing at first, and for all I know could have recited Das Kapital under her breath.

‘Be a darling, Silent Face, could you go to the bar and get us a drink?’ said the girl with no name.

So I walked to one of the bars, near to the Selector room, and you know once there I had to wait a while for Trotsky’s beer to be poured: a thick black substance it was, said to be a favourite drink with Irish navvies many years ago.

‘It will be two or three minutes more!’ shouted the busy barmaid.

As I was waiting, I watched the good dancers right at the front of the dance floor, and here two young ladies crashed into one another, and came spinning over to me. The young lady, in a flowery cat suit, greeted her friend, ‘Oh, it is wonderful to see you again.’

The young ladies seemed to me at first to have all the hallmarks of friends who had not seen each other for some time; but listening to them it seemed they went out together most weekends.

Greet one another with the kiss of peace All God’s people send you their good wishes, (2 Corinthians 13:12)

I had forgotten.

‘Oh, look at the old fashion tumblers,’ said the girl with no name, when I returned back with a tray of drinks.

A little later we somehow got back to the subject of the Pop party. Trotsky girl listened attentively as the girl with no name spoke about the snobs she had come across at the Pop party.

‘They were wonderfully nasty to each other,’ said the girl with no name.

The well known political agitator for some reason looked pleased at this news. Some Rude boys, who were dancing just in front of us, interrupted their conversation. Rude boys in the Silent scene tend to be young men who cannot fit into any fashionable sect.

‘Hey, give us a fag!’ shouted the fat Rude Boy, who had a rare face for punching.

Trotsky girl ignored him, and said to the girl with no name, ‘I would never live with a man, I would buy a house round the corner from him and only visit him when I wanted to,’ she said this with a great emphasis on the I.

The girl with no name agreed with this idea of detached habitation, and the two of them then glared at the Rude Boys,

who had now started to sing, 'Trotsky can't dance! Trotsky can't dance!'

Thankfully, the Rude boys soon went away; but I think it was something to do with this that made me see the revellers as ordinary people, now in fancy dress, rather than Pop party people. Anyway, the visit back to the old world was still interesting with the fashions displaying some sort of understanding of Pop. Even the stewards had taken time to dress up in Pop clothes; some of them in fact had grown sideburns, a fashion I believe that was popular in the middle period of Pop.

After the bands the DJ decided to play some songs and videos of the most famous man from the Pop era. His name was Pax Vobiscum, and he was now on screen all over Disco Days blasting out from every speaker. A lot of old Pop people said that he was the greatest Pop star there had ever been, others said that he was mad.

Trotsky girl, and the girl with no name, watched the famous artiste dance on screen in an outrageous costume. Holding her hand in front of her mouth, the girl with no name laughed, and said, 'He's really strange.'

Meanwhile, a man in a hurry to get to the dance floor brushed by me, and nearly knocked me off my firm footing. He snarled quite annoyed, 'What are you doing in here - you're not a Popper!'

The man who was about sixty, dressed in bondage, then disappeared into the ice smoke, and I never saw him again - thank goodness. However, the girl with no name and Trotsky girl thought this very funny, and just before they disappeared into the disco clouds they shouted to me, 'Are you not coming Anti-pop!'

Very funny, I thought to myself, and walked to the higher ground where the drinkers and moony dancers were standing. And there up against a wall I watched the old world spin for a while. After about twenty minutes, when they reappeared down near the music consul, I rejoined Trotsky girl, and the girl with no name. The girl with no name signalled with a smile that she had quite enjoyed herself. Trotsky girl on the other hand never let on, she

just picked up the nearest tumbler and drank a gulp of beer. 'Same again, then?' she said, and wandered back to the bar with a strange woman's stagger.

When she returned she handed me my drink, and she stared at me with eyes that could not hide the dreams of past Soviet states. 'Where are your friends, then, Silent Face?' she asked, in a menacing voice.

I told her that Brian, Clare, Cathy, and Ian were all still at the Pop party, however their good names I could see made no impression on the political agitator's face. She just went back to the spinning strobes and revolutions of the dance floor.

Trotsky girl seemed to be well known in Disco Days, and I drew the conclusion that this old-fashioned nightclub in town - where they still played Pop music all the year round - was a meeting place for the oddballs and eccentrics.

As everyone knows, who has ever been to a disco, there is someone called the DJ, and it is his job to control all the sounds and lights. The DJ in Disco Days was a very old man of about 80, and as I watched him he just then decided to come out of his booth and meet one or two disco fans, who had brought along some old vinyl records in the hope I think of getting them played. The fans, however, were disappointed: for the playing record faded and the old DJ had to get back into his booth quickly and play another groove. The next record he played, as it happened, was a classic song from the Pop world and, as soon as the first note hit the heads of the Festival people, it made the majority of them come to the dance floor and dance under the swirling lights and strobes. And would you believe it in amongst this new batch of dancers was my Silent Face friend, Brian, playing an invisible guitar.

'Brian!' I shouted, as he danced by me.

'How did you know about Disco Days?'

'Clare knew it was on,' he cried, and he pointed to a figure coming through the crowd.

‘Where’s Cathy and Ian?’ I asked, interested in the new lovers. ‘Oh, they decided to stay at the Pop party!’ shouted Brian, against the disco noise.

After the introductions a very odd event took place indeed: for a mountain man appeared through the disco crowd, and with slow paces came towards us. To our astonishment he lifted Trotsky girl high into the air, hitting a passer-by in the face with her jackboot. I looked at Brian and he looked at me, as the big man swung the little agitator round and round.

Moments later mortified and dizzy Trotsky girl, back on her feet, immediately started to shout and scream at the mountain man. ‘You senseless idiot! You big idiot!’

Clare seeing the trouble went to help Trotsky girl - who I must say was looking rather out of sorts by this time.

Presently, the bouncers arrived to have a word with the mountain man, who I could see was flushed with drink, ‘Right leave it out, big man,’ said the steward, with the crew cut.

The big man’s mate soon appeared on the scene, and offered an apology on behalf of the mountain man. He said in a droll voice, ‘Sorry, he won’t do it again - he’s just drunk.’

The big man realising that he would be lucky to stay in Disco Days, after his outrageous behaviour, quickly offered an excuse, ‘It was only a bit of harmless fun; I thought I knew the girl.’

Clare got a glass of water from the bar, and when she returned she put her arm around Trotsky girl.

‘He’s just a harmless idiot, you’ll be all right,’ she said, as she bent down.

‘Let’s grab some seats at the far end of the disco,’ I suggested, and like magic everyone agreed.

However, it was bad luck that there were not enough chairs, and I had to shout at two disco dollies, who were sitting right in front of the speakers. Why the speakers had been positioned near to the seated area is a question only Pop designers can answer. ‘Can I take these two chairs?’ I bawled.

The two disco dollies never heard a thing; they just sat nodding to the terrific noise that was coming out of the speakers at the back of them.

‘They will be deaf by the end of the night!’ shouted Brian, as he came over to help me.

A little later during a conversation that seemed to involve mainly Trotsky girl and Clare, I noticed at the table next to us two men. One man was puffing on a pipe while the other stared at the disco dancers. It wasn’t long till the scent of the Pop drug wacky baccy blew over towards our table. And I must say it was very strange indeed to see a man puff on a pipe as if his very life depended on it.

As time went by the two tit for tat friends sat dreamy eyed passing the pipe, and affirming life to each other in short statements. ‘It’s good stuff this black,’ said the handsome man, to his companion.

Then suddenly a light went on from around the cloakroom area; someone had opened a door and it revealed the two men before it went magically out again. Fascinated, I sat back and watched the handsome man, and the now revealed white-faced friend. When it seemed the turn of the white-faced-friend to take the pipe, the handsome man passed it to him. Then he watched his friend to see if he was doing it correctly. After a few minutes, the pipe was handed back to the handsome man by his white-faced friend, with a reverence that I am sure would have pleased the pipe maker. ‘Watch,’ said the white-faced friend.

The handsome man at that moment looked in my direction and, in that second, without knowing it he transferred his dope thoughts to me.

This time, directing the handsome man’s attention to the approaching bouncers, the white-faced friend whispered, ‘Better take care.’

The handsome man immediately took the pipe out of his mouth and secretly placed it under the table, and with dog eyes staring with the excuse already made up in them - he waited for the bouncers to go by. The bouncers looked over towards our

table, but the smell of dope did not alert their senses, and they continued to walk in the direction of the laser lights. The handsome man, as he brought the pipe out from under the table, surveyed everything around him as if there were agents after him. It was theatrical all right though more akin, I thought, to old Pop stars than disco dancing dope smokers.

Suddenly, the handsome man said to me, 'Do you want some?'

He then held the pipe in front of my eyes and glanced at it, as if it contained nuclear fuel stolen from some secret government research laboratory.

'Go on it will do you good,' he said staring.

'No thanks,' I said thanking him.

Just as he was about to hand it back to his white-faced friend, Trotsky girl stretched out her hand and intercepted the pipe, and fly as you like she said, 'Don't mind if I do,' and puffed the dope with all the trickery of false hope.

'This used to be a really good club, you know, in Pop times,' said the handsome man.

His statement surprised me: for he did not look old enough to have been around in the grand old days of Pop. Thrilled at meeting a man who had really disco danced, I asked him, 'What was it like in the Pop era?'

Hearing my words his face lit up with a million glittering memories. Then he spoke excitedly again, 'Oh, the girls were unbelievable,' and he started to disco dance in his seat.

Meanwhile, the Trotsky girl handed the pipe back to the handsome man, as if they were part of the same gang. She said in a cheeky voice, 'Thanks a lot, big man.'

However, it was the white-faced friend who intercepted the pipe this time, and it was his mouth that puffed the dope. But the handsome man did not seem to mind. 'I don't come down to the city much these days, but the dancing during Pop times was tremendous; I'd still come to Disco Days if it were like that,' said the handsome man, forgetting all about the pipe and his white-faced friend.

He went onto talk about his religion - a Pop charismatic thing that was in vogue during Pop times. You see for some reason it seemed during Pop times the church was neglected by a large majority of the people, and that only a sham born again movement was heard of, known in the Silent scene as the Dreary Charismatics. It may well have been the case that many people were scared off by the Pop born again movements, and their representation of Christianity, that they ran away from organised religion altogether.

I thought the best way to understand religion during Pop times was to reflect through world history like this: in ancient Greece you could have walked up to an Athenian and asked him what he believed in. He would have on hearing this turned to one of the statues and pointed to say Dionysus. The Roman would have done likewise and showed you Neptune or Mars, or some other god. For the Christian it is about the book: the word. However, in Pop times there seem to have been a movement who worshipped vacuums: the Vacuum Lovers. And although the Vacuum Lovers could never exactly say what they believed in, or did not believe in, it was vacuums that they worshipped. Some would say a bit of this or a bit of that; but fundamentally they did not know. Listening to our friend, I thought he had been a Vacuum Lover until the Dreary Charismatics had caught him, and the extreme message had drawn him back to the book; and over the years he had mellowed to the fellow sitting next to me passing the pipe, and joking with his white-faced friend.

Silent Faces all know their Bible, so I quoted him: *And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might(Deuteronomy 6:5)*

The handsome man said, 'Yes,' and moved back in his chair, and it was then that I felt a strange sort of causality upset him: a mixture of money and mystic stardom. He went onto tell me all about the opportunities he had had during Pop times. And as he spoke I could see him quite clearly in the middle of a crowd, always centre stage. He could have been something you know this handsome man.

‘The drink and drugs were just part of the scene,’ he said smiling.

‘You’re glad to be finished with all that?’ I asked.

‘Oh, yes,’ he said looking at his pipe. Then he added, ‘This stuff is nothing, you know, it’s the devil that leads you astray.’

The handsome man then opened his eyes wide and stared as if a thousand horrors lay on the horizon waiting for him. I glanced from his face to where the unreal Pop costumes were on parade, but it was no use looking there, for they were all from the High Street stores and secondhand boutiques. I wanted to see and hear the original Pop things; the fashions, the words, the colours. I wanted to be part of the time: Pop time. Then in my imagination I saw factories and offices all lined with Pop paraphernalia. The workers and bosses were all smiling. The radio was blaring with an endless stream of interviews, setting the vox Pop standard.

They say the newspapers took sometime to cotton on to the Pop style, but oh boy when they did they would not let go of it, and from then on to the end of the Pop world all editions were produced in the Pop style.

In literature the first woman to declare herself a feminist was a Pop writer, and then others, in turn, tried to make some kind of shift with a male dominated world. But alas the movement went off the rails at the end of the Pop world. The main problem seems to have been that the men they chose to attack, for their obscene views on women, were the very same types they themselves turned out to be. Sadly all this can be seen in the literature of the period that calls itself Pop.

So many groups must have been there on the last days of Pop, I thought to myself. Just then, I remembered a story my uncle had told me about how all the Pop people - when it came to the end of the Pop world - all flocked onto the streets and gathered outside television centres. The Pop people holding their idols above their heads, chanting, ‘We want our Pop world back! We want our Pop world back!’

It was an awful business, I remember my uncle saying; although it must be said that it was not all doom and gloom in the

last days of Pop, for some folk celebrated the end of the Pop world by singing and dancing. And I guess from that day on: the day the Pop world died, the Pop Festival was born. The Pop stars were old men and women by this time, but very few of them came out to shout for an old Pop world. Most of them were hiding in castles and security fenced homes. You see things had drifted to such a bad state that a lot of people did not know how to behave. But a new world was to be built on an old foundation. Just like the quotation from an American president: *That this nation, under God, shall have a new birth of freedom; and that government of the people, by the people, and for the people, shall not perish from the earth.* (A Lincoln 1809-1865)

To understand the downfall of the Pop world it is important to understand the group the Recession-knights. They thought it was their task to create a recession, and make the world a more competitive and better place to live in. The Recession-knight philosophy is easy to understand, you see they said to the Pop world: 'We shall have to cut your workforce to a bare minimum. This will in time make them slimmer and fitter for the fight against our competitors in the rest of the world, and with the help of new technology we shall ultimately rule the world,' after making great speeches like this they would usually shout and demand: 'Three cheers for the Recession-knights!'

Unfortunately, some of the Recession-knights were not strong enough for the economic fight. You see to bring about these reforms the Recession-knights had first of all to create a recession: 'There will be no assurances for anyone, no matter what industry he or she works in. You're lucky to have a job. We shall cut and we shall cut the workforce until there is mass unemployment - so if you don't play the recession game we will make you redundant.'

These are some of the things the Recession-knights said to the workers during Pop times. The Recession-knights also vowed to keep down inflation by wages of worry. 'Zero inflation,' was another famous chant. However, they forgot that you reap what you sow, and a recession does not last forever: doom and gloom have no place in the Christian heart.

The Recession-knights - who by the way all lived lives of great luxury in huge houses up and down the country - all thought that economic gain was paramount, and to be played out at the expense of others. If you can imagine a man holding a door open and pointing outside to Antarctic conditions, then saying to you, 'Well, you have two choices I either pay you off, or you stay here and play the game of recession. Now what will it be! Are you a Recession-knight?'

Meanwhile, back on the dance floor of Disco Days everything seemed wonderful and unreal. The music whistled back down the glory lanes of popular music. Suddenly another cloud of ice smoke came and blew over the dance floor and everything simply disappeared. Then flashing lights in rainbow colours made everything come alive again. White faces and fleeting glimpses of limbs and bodies soon appeared, as if in photographs, in the joy of dance - the Pop dance.

We all sat not saying very much, as the fashion of the moment demanded, while the music boomed out in every corner. Trotsky girl stared into the mist and only now and again looked at me, but quick as that look was, it was a look of fear: a look that could never had said I have known trust - never.

Brian and Clare sipped their drinks. The girl with no name read a pamphlet about photographic love, dropped by a young advertising boy who incidentally had dressed himself up as a hillbilly rock and roller for the Pop Festival.

'Have you got any friends here?' I asked Trotsky girl, as she stared at the dancers.

She turned quickly and looked at the girl with no name. Then she answered in her own street fashion tongue, 'I came with Jackie and this other girl, but Jackie has met some guy, and the other girl has gone home early.'

Whenever possible we tried to bring Trotsky girl into the conversation. However, there was not much in the way of circular conversation going on at the moment so - as if existing in separate compartments of life - we all started chatting about different things.

The girl with no name, who was sitting beside me, started telling me about her friend who was living abroad - and it seemed by the sound of things he was going to be the next president of the United States.

Then out of the blue Brian put his hand up and shouted, 'Nick!'

This made us all stop what we were doing and, with the name still echoing in-between the bass and the pulse, we all looked for Nick.

Nick presently appeared. He was a well-dressed old man from the Pop era and, with soft-spoken effeminate words, he said, 'Hello Brian, my boy. How are you?'

Nick was the club owner, and with movements of his body particularly his hands - he signalled to everyone who looked his way that he could make a million decisions in one night. Brian and Nick chatted, telling each other the highlights of each other's week. Then in the latter stages of the conversation, with words more akin to princes than Poppers, Nick invited us all to the Selector room. He said full of pretence, 'That's where all the special people meet.'

Brian put the suggestion to us and so with everyone in agreement we followed Nick down a corridor dark and damp. When we reached the end of the corridor, Nick signalled to the burly bouncers to open the door.

Once inside, the Selector room we milled around for a time and wondered why the special people were so drunk. This led Trotsky girl to scoff and say to the girl with no name, 'There are no freeloaders in here - only honest drunks.'

Trotsky girl was right and we all had to buy ourselves something nice to drink at the horseshoe shaped bar. After being served we all went in search of the fake couches down by the doorway.

'Look there's some seats there,' said Clare, as she pointed at an obscene bright red settee.

Nick came by again and said, 'Everything all right, kids.'

The girl with no name, who had a supercilious look on her face, asked him, 'Is this your place, then, Nick?'

Nick said, 'Yes,' but said no more.

Brian and Nick seemed to know each other quite well, and went on to chat, in a routine question and answer way, as regards the opposite sex. Nick's face was cheery and he was good company, but he did not stay for too long, for the fear, I think, of being known.

'Right, kids, see you later. Enjoy yourselves,' he said, and I watched him walk to the door, where the late-night bouncers saluted him with wide-awake eyes.

Trotsky girl said to Brian, 'He's an ex Pop star, you know.'

Brian for the first time smiled at her and said, 'Yes, I know, my father and him were in bands during Pop times.'

Trotsky girl never one to miss a trick smiled back, and said, 'Aye, the Pop world they knew how to do it all right. They didn't believe in anything.'

The Selector situation was far more comfortable. There was not the same oppression from the big loud speakers, as in the main part of the disco. However, the ones who danced in the Selector room danced slower resembling humans needing the toilet, and they were really quite funny.

Selected pictures hung on every wall and echoed art from every period of Pop. My favourite was the one that had two circles, one red, and the other white, inside a black triangle. The others that impressed my senses were: *Moon Woman Cuts the Circle*, by Jackson Pollock; and *Landscape with Two Nudes and Three Eyes*, by David Salle.

There were lots of photographs and the most interesting by far was the one of the two naked women dragging each other through ink. In the far corner of the Selector room sat an old woman, who told everyone who looked her way that life was just a case of fitting in. And although she may have felt the days and nights, I thought she was brave to come to the Festival of Pop in search of company.

Trotsky girl said to Clare, 'See that woman over there, she comes to the Pop Festival every year, but she never speaks to anyone. Someone told me that she had once been married to a famous Pop star, and that she comes to the Festival every year just to dream about him.'

Brian became quite excited about the woman who sat all alone, and he said to me, 'I bet she is rich, Lawrence, maybe famous.'

Brian did not like tragedy, and strangely at this point the women at our table all started chatting in female ways, and they made it quite obvious it was an exclusive conversation.

My Silent Face friend in his usual way reckoned that they had for some reason gone to the extreme lengths of sending signals of birth pangs all the way from the stars to scare all the men off.

'What!' I said.

'They're not interested in us Lawrence,' he said quite upset.

Brian, after this, started to fidget with the beer mat in the middle of the table. Then he started talking a lot of rubbish about some fantastic business scheme. However, thankfully, Brian accepted the situation, and with priceless hazel eyes he showed me the reason why folk need to break free.

Looking up at the two small speakers that were on the wall, Brian said, 'Isn't it strange how you can hear the two different types of music at once in the Selector room.'

The music that drifted in and out of the Selector room came from Disco Days dance floor, and as it collided with the tape music of the Selector room it made little hisses.

'I should have brought my tape device and taped this crashing Pop thing,' said Brian, in one of his music mad moods.

When the woman's conference was over, Clare said to Brian, 'I see the ex-Pop star and his pals are having a ball at the bar.'

Brian nodded right away and asked Clare what she thought about them. Clare looked at the ex-Pop owner, dressed in tight black trousers and white satin shirt, then she said diplomatically, 'Well, there certainly having fun.'

Not long after this the party atmosphere really got going. Nick the ex-Pop star and now club owner, shouted over to a beautiful woman at the bar, 'Let's dance!'

And everyone around the horseshoe shaped bar started to dance the Pop dance. The ex-Pop star came near to our table with a blonde woman. The woman, dressed in flares and a tank top, danced with him; and as he put his arm around her, he shouted into her ocean ear, 'Let's go baby. Let's dance in the old Pop way.'

Once Nick and his woman had moved away, Clare laughed and said, 'I wonder if my mother knows him.'

Trotsky girl immediately picked up on this, and she asked with calculated excitement, 'Was your mum into the Pop thing too?'

'Oh, she was a punk,' answered Clare laughing.

Then she added, 'But like so many of that generation she went onto become a Yuppie.'

Brian, who was looking thankful that he was back to a world with words with women, said to Clare, 'My mum and dad still play their old Pop tunes before they go out at weekends, and you know I've got to shout to tell them to turn down the noise.'

'It's just life,' I said.

Brian nodded in agreement and everyone laughed and thought about their loved ones and the Popular culture of yesteryear. Moments later Brian and Clare became quite excited, and they chatted about old album covers, CD's and TV programmes: 'Did you see? Have you heard?' and so on.

As I sat listening to them, I could not help noticing the Pop painting at the far side of the bar. The Pop painting was writing that read: Everything is Surreal.

I laughed when I read it, and to my surprise Trotsky girl asked me what I was laughing at.

I duly pointed to the writing around the frame. And when Trotsky girl understood what painting it was, she asked me in a serious voice, 'What do you find funny about it, Silent Face?'

I felt the challenge like an old debt that follows you around, and when it comes, it comes to you and makes you justify your

position at the expense of another. So I told her that I thought the old road long gone, and our new culture better in every way, 'I hope the truth will come to all worshippers of vacuums,' I concluded.

Trotsky girl did not agree and said in a bitter voice that she had a friend who had written a book called *The Vacuum Case*.

This prompted Clare to start a conversation about books and art in general, and she quickly rhymed off three modern writers, then added an obscure German woman, who wrote books in Paris.

Clare, after listening to Trotsky, put her elbows on her knees, then she asked me what my favourite Pop book was. I thought about this for a few seconds. Then I told her sincerely: 'If you want to understand the Pop world you have to listen to the music. The idea is in the music.'

This statement made Trotsky girl beam bright red, and I think she wanted to say the first thing that came into her fanatical head. However, she composed herself, and a little later when things were rather dull she spoke in an interesting way, 'Have you ever read any of the feminist Pop writers?' she asked, while looking at me.

I had never heard of Virago girls and, as she introduced them to me one by one, it seemed to me that it wasn't a case of who was a feminist during Pop times, but who wasn't - and that includes the men.

'Virago girls, sorry, I have never heard of them in the Silent scene,' reported Brian, a little baffled.

Clare I think had heard of them, but she never let on. She chose instead to talk about a classic: 'Wuthering Heights, now there's a book written on everyone's heart,' she said.

Then Clare started singing a Pop song about the book, and we all burst out laughing.

Getting back into the Pop Festival spirit of things, I cried, 'Brilliant!' and we all thought about other songs and books.

'Do you think this new society is any better,' yelled the Trotsky girl, full of anger.

For the next five minutes she stared at me, and her eyes reflected every act of unfaithfulness. I saw all sorts of things there: child killers, murdered lovers, limbs being amputated, people being poisoned, ruining acts - God all sorts of things.

When Trotsky girl, the mind-boggler of our new society, finally stopped staring at me she slipped back to the girl she was: happy at being unhappy. And I, brave as a fool, told her that our new society had a foundation and a union between people that had not been present in past Pop times. But as I spoke, I could see that this only added to the old score of the believer and the nonbeliever, the crooked and the cross.

Brian seeing the potential for another flare-up from the Trotsky girl managed somehow to change the subject to films, 'Anyone going to see 'Star Thoughts' on at the ABC?' he said anxiously.

No one had any plans to go, and I reminded myself of the fact that Brian was not a reader. I think someone must have told my Silent Face friend, at an early age, that the men of literature could make you wander forever through a maze, and on that strange journey through life you could go off your head, and be almost choked by the printed word. No, for Brian - like so many others in the Silent scene - the world and knowledge would be understood by the images from speech.

The controversy about the old world and about the new world was not altogether over. In charming rebuke the Trotsky girl turned to the girl with no name and said, 'This society that your friends, the Silent Faces, are talking about is not real. I tell you, my mother's fancy man works for some modern new company, and he takes her abroad on trips, all expenses paid. And that's not all, I know he puts in through expenses, twice a year for two new dresses because he says he has to take her out when he wines and dines clients.'

After a long pause Trotsky girl shouted, 'So don't tell me about this new wonderful society of ours. The bosses look after themselves!'

Trotsky girl at this point looked as if she had managed to get all the venom out of her system. 'Let me out!' it must have shouted. 'Let me out!'

After this our Silent Faces watched the men and women come and go into the Selector room; sometimes the Pop people would stay for a drink, but more often than not they would go back out to the main section of Disco Days, everyone in search of something, somewhere.

It appeared, however, to me that the women who were single in the Selector room operated with a fear around them: one single look into the wrong pair of eyes it seemed could spoil their Pop Festival night.

A little later when I was talking to Brian about the people who had come on their own to Disco Days, I suddenly caught sight of a lonely young man at the end of the horseshoe shaped bar. He was wonderful to watch as he tried to fill in time. When I looked back for him he was gone, and this in turn made me wonder about the witnesses around him. The ones who were knocking back drinks and dreaming of diamonds - but would they come forward if asked about him.

'Yes, I saw him, can't remember him, though.'

'What do you mean, did I speak to him.'

'What happened to him, anyway?'

'Who cares!'

More witnesses appeared this time from the side games room. It was the old-fashioned Jeans Boys from yesteryear - there were still a few around in the Silent scene - some of them for the Festival this year wore black leather jackets, and some wore printed tee shirts with Pop idols on them. And it really did seem for a moment that the Pop Festival belonged to them, as they headed for the neon lights of Disco Days.

The last one to cross the threshold of the Selector room, I noticed, was wearing a picture of the last Pop star hero, Pax Vobiscum, on the back of his leather jacket. Brian must have noticed him, for he asked me the following question: 'Lawrence

did you ever hear the tale about the last known Pop star hero when he was staying in London?’

‘No,’ I replied, knowing there were many stories about him.

‘Oh, it’s so funny. He used to go around dressed up as a road sweeper and chat up young students, who were on their way to colleges and business schools. Well, one fine day he met the daughter of a duchess, and after falling in love with her the two of them went off on a world cruise together. The love affair of course did not last long,’ said Brian in an actor’s voice, while tapping his cigarette ash into a big ashtray on the table in front of him.

After a theatrical pause Brian started again, laying no scent where the story would end, ‘Yes, she was the daughter of a duchess and he was the last ever Pop star. It was only a matter of time before they parted like enemies of culture and religion. She was so mad that she went and sold her story to the gutter Pop press, and revealed the last known Pop star would only make love if he could wear women’s clothes.’

Everyone laughed at Brian’s story and, you must remember among my Silent Face friends, Brian is the most sympathetic towards the old Poppers.

Trotsky girl turned away in disgust and I think she thought the attack was on love, for something made her say to Brian, in an angry voice, ‘So you think there is a thing called love, do you?’

‘Yes,’ said Brian, surprised at the challenge.

Trotsky girl came back as if all her cronies were listening in somewhere in the Selector room. She said forcefully, half in earnest, half in jest, ‘There is no such thing as love, Silent Face. People have just got to get on with each other, so they try and be truthful and speak with emotion, but I will tell you straight, love is just sentimentality born out of polite necessity - that’s all it is.’

Brian could stand and shout with businessmen and taxi drivers in the city, but he was not one to fight with the ladies, and he retreated when he should have said that love was the essence of life, and every fragment from art to science was born of it.

When my thoughts turned themselves to words, Trotsky girl swept her hand across her face - deception it seemed was an easy

friend. Clare kept quiet for a time and sided with Brian and myself in looks. Then after a few minutes she tried to bring Trotsky girl back into the company. Obviously knowing that the revolutionary had a little girl, Clare asked her, 'How old is your daughter?'

'She's two,' replied Trotsky girl, then mumbled something about having to go home soon.

Just at that moment, a few more Silent Faces from the Silent scene appeared in the Selector room, and right away Brian pointed them out.

'Look, Lawrence, good to see a few more of us here, eh.'

I agreed and wondered what the future would be, 'I mean we're not going to celebrate this Pop Festival ad infinitum are we?'

'Oh, I think it will be popular for a few years yet,' said Brian, who went onto say, 'In fact, next year I'm definitely dressing up in a Pop costume.'

Laughing, Clare replied, 'As long as you don't wear those tight white trousers that make you look like a ballet dancer.'

Things brightened up after this, and we stayed in the Selector room until the suggestion came from the girl with no name to go back outside to the main dance part of Disco Days.

So outside in the roller coaster disco we danced once more along with the rebel revellers, until a fight broke out on the far side. A man of about fifty dressed in pyjamas (fashionable in Pop punk times) wrestled with a younger man to the sound of funk music. However, luck for them lay in punches that kept missing, and thankfully the bouncers arrived to sort things out.

'Right break it up!' shouted the bouncer, as he grabbed the younger of the two men around the waist.

'Let me go!' shouted the young man, 'I'll kill him!'

Another bouncer held the older man, but the older man looked as if he understood the routine quite well and said nothing.

From where I stood, I could see that the younger man's Pop tee shirt, that had the name The Destroy Boys printed on it, was ripped. The Destroy Boys, a movement fashionable in Pop times, are still quite conspicuous in and around our Silent scene today.

The young man took a bit of holding, and one or two other bouncers were called in to help.

Just then the crowd around the dance floor became restless. The music had stopped, and the lights were now all on. Some of the people started chanting: 'Down with the Destroy Boys! Out with the Destroy Boys!'

Brian thought this a good time to go, so we all headed for the exit sign. However, just before leaving the club, I glanced back towards the dance floor. The Pop music was on again, and as the lights dimmed I watched the old world spin once again: 'So long Disco Days.'

Strange as it sounds, as we all walked along by the snooker hall and the little flower shop, not far from Disco Days, a voice came from a dark doorway saying, 'Hey, you, Silent Face, listen to me. I tell you the Pop world is not dead. No, it's about to make a comeback. You'd better ask your mother and father if you can borrow their old clothes.'

The phantom of Pop from the doorway then laughed a mad laugh, 'Ha, ha, ha, ha!'

Clare thought the whole thing hilarious, and she asked the phantom of Pop what else he could tell us about the year we were already six months into.

'There will be free love and free drugs for everyone,' answered the Pop phantom proudly. Then he added cheekily, 'Now that's cool, eh.'

The girl with no name, who had just put her arm around me before the phantom of Pop had spoken, was next to ask a question, 'What will the style be; for there were many different fads in Pop times, were there not?'

The doorway went silent for a minute, and it didn't look as if the phantom of Pop had thought about this one.

'Will it be just another revamp of some old designer thing?' I asked, keeping up the fun.

Then the phantom replied in a pronounced tone, 'No, it will be sixties with a touch of punk,' he said, then he kicked a can of cola onto the 3 a.m. street.

Everyone laughed except Trotsky girl, who gave a look as if she understood these men who hide in doorways during the Pop Festival, and proclaim the Pop world is about to make a comeback.

And you know for as long as we all walked along that late night street, I could hear the phantom's voice whispering to other people as they passed by him: 'Listen, I tell you, the Pop world is not dead, it's not, listen...'

7 The Subconscious Cafe

In a cosy coffee place, not all that far from the landscape of noise and pleasure, we had no bother at all in finding a corner where we could get comfortable and chat. The Subconscious Cafe is open every day of the week for late night callers and midnight artists. Someone once told me that the Subconscious Cafe had been leased in Pop times to two men - a German and an Austrian - and that their philosophies had been very popular, indeed.

The cafe decorations are strange: monsters and mayhem are everywhere. The sign above the window in the Subconscious Cafe, as if to keep you away from the path to glory, reads:

Anything can come this way between dreams and nightmares

The Subconscious Cafe has a reputation for attracting, poets, and beatnik writers, from the ever efficient machine called literature. And it is here that they sit and discuss the most important topics of the day, until the small hours of the morning. To give you an example the cafe is a well known haunt for the local underground movement who call themselves the Anti Tree Cutters League. The group sometimes meet in the cafe, before

going off to protest about the cutting down of trees by some rich landowner.

Naturally, the present owner of the cafe had tonight hung Pop pictures from tabloid newspapers all over the cafe bar: pictures of Pop stars in all sorts of weird and wonderful costumes. As if they were paintings these original news pages were stuck inside frames.

I had been many times before to the cafe. The last time was with a girl; she was celebrating before going off to a land of genocide and dreams - well that's what she called it. I remember her telling me, in the cafe, that the reason she was going there was to look for adventure. But nobody knows how she got on in a land where people kill each other for the belief in a gun, and the right to walk through toilet like towns chanting: 'We want a land of genocide and dreams! We want a land indecent and obscene!'

The cafe is always busy especially when the leisure clubs come out at night. The wonderful athletes gather round the tables and crunch on apples, at the same time as they chew over topics about muscle power and love. At the moment, however, nothing much was being said at our table in the Subconscious Cafe, so I decided to excuse myself and go in search of the toilet.

Just at the turn of the spiral stairs, I bumped into two theatrical looking girls drinking bubbly, celebrating the Pop Festival. The one with the shoulder length dark hair looked up and down my biblical robe, then she said, 'Don't you know it's the Pop Festival, Silent Face?'

I replied with a true smile, and a quick look up and down her purple bell-bottom outfit, 'Oh, we have dressed up every other year for the Festival, so this year we thought we would just come in the present fashion.'

Then I pushed the door open and went inside and there to my surprise was an old man Rapper rapping to himself in the mirror of lost time: You know, I know, we know why. You know, I know, we know why...

I was sure he saw me in the mirror, but he never let on. Nevertheless to my delight along with the rapping sound he started

to dance the old-fashioned Pop dance, and make drum sounds with his feet and hands. And as the man sang the whole of the Pop era seemed to come at me in a pantomime of looks and lyric slang through the mirror of lost time.

When I was heading out again he smiled at me, then he said in a cheerful sad sort of way, 'You know, son, everyone was happy then, before we went anti-car, anti-Pop. I tell you, I used to drive in and out of this city every day of the week, and the roads were full of cars. There were cars everywhere. Ah, they were the days all right. Now it's all magnetic trains, and God knows what else. Well, that's progress for you, I suppose.'

When he had finished speaking he turned round and went back to the mirror of lost time, and as he combed his hair back his face contorted and explained a lot of things to me about the strange ways of Pop people.

Meanwhile, upstairs in the Subconscious Cafe where the walls are full of Pop portraits of obscure prophets and mind men, I walked back to where my friends sat, slowly passing all the strange faces of the people who sat there in the cafe. They were all there you know waiting for me: murderers, thieves, corrupted money men, bammy writers, and boo boys. I tell you the Subconscious Cafe is some place.

And as I walked by them, they all seemed to chant different songs about missed opportunities and doomed love. Thankfully, in one breath the Christian spirit blew them all away.

As I sat down, Clare said, 'I ordered you coffee, Lawrence.' 'Yes, that's just what I wanted,' I said, as if in a dream.

With eyes that threw doubts into every corner, Clare asked Brian, 'What are you doing tomorrow, Brian?'

It may have been late, but Brian had his familiar defence system operational, 'Oh, sorry, Clare, I'm having a meal with my folks.'

The word sorry I thought was not sorry at all, but glad they would not meet. The conversations, I must say, are always a little off the wall down at the Subconscious Cafe. However, the beautiful witch that Clare could sometimes be, smiled at Brian.

Then the waitress approached our table, and Clare did not pursue the question any longer.

The waitress who was middle-aged, attractive, and most definitely from the Pop era, stood in front of us and smiled a golden smile before saying, 'Good evening, Silent Faces, have you had a good time at the Pop Festival, then?'

'Oh, Yes,' we all replied.

Presently, the waitress began to pour out coffee and fill up the plates with nuts and crisps on the Sub Cafe table. It was never a place to talk, while eating, in the Subconscious Cafe, so fitting in with the night, as one does, I dreamed outside the cafe window. And there I saw a deadpan intellectual consultant trying to hide all the natural symptoms of life. I saw him quite clearly, you know, it was a modern setting, somewhere. The consultant was standing in the middle of a kitchen. I think there was a party going on. I could see my Silent Face there. Yes, that was it, I was waiting for his daughter to arrive to tell her about the end of the Pop culture, and the beginning of the new world.

Inside the kitchen party a few faces became clear: one was a jester, and four beautiful foreign looking women. Everyone was trying to impress the silver-haired consultant, who for some reason was playing that awful game of hard to get. Just then a Lebanese looking woman opened the window and chucked her cigarette out onto the lawn, and it was then that I heard the following dialogue: 'How are things in the hospital?' said the jester to the consultant.

'Fine,' answered the consultant, who then quickly changed the topic to music. 'Did you know Beethoven's father used to get the young Ludwig out of bed during the night to play for his guests.'

'Swarthy!' cried the jester, 'I did not.'

The jester then clapped his hands twice, and in a booming voice he asked the consultant, 'I say, have you ever read the book Ulysses?'

The consultant quickly asked him, 'Is that the Irish edition?'

Looking pleased with himself, the jester replied, 'Yes.'

The consultant then lost his professional look, and said in an angry tone, 'Gibberish, that's what it is, bloody good gibberish.'

We all seemed to come up from coffee cups at the same time, as the waitress arrived back at our table. 'Would you like some more coffee?' she said, as if she wanted to take us all home for the night.

Just then a horrible looking man, at table twenty-four shouted: 'Where's my coffee!'

The nice waitress looked at me and, with a tired expression on her face, she said, 'Aye, you get them all in here, Silent Face.'

As she picked up an empty plate she shouted back, 'Right, I'm coming!'

The girl with no name must have noticed that I was looking a little bit anxious, because of the people in the Subconscious Cafe; for she tapped her hand on mine, then she said, 'You'll be all right, Lawrence, won't you.'

Everyone laughed, and Trotsky girl, who did not care for the design or detail of any place, started to rub her hands together. The young woman, who was wearing small round spectacles and a Pop demob suit, after this asked our Silent Faces, 'Right, who wants to talk more Pop, then?'

'Oh, no,' said Brian, holding his hands over his ears.

'Well, it is the Festival of Pop after all,' said Clare the chairwoman.

Seeing the green light go on for more Pop talk, Trotsky girl shouted, 'Yes!'

So we talked more Pop for a time and argued about this and that. Then Clare tried to sum things up by saying, 'I say, Lawrence, the Pop world may be over long ago, but we're not all that sure you have got things right. Biblical robes may well be all the fashion for the young generation at the moment, and Silent Bars may be where they all meet, but there are huge problems in our society.'

Clare rarely over stayed her welcome in conversation. She said what she thought all right, but she was never comfortable with causes. The vision of the hero, dead or alive, distressed her.

Thankfully, however, she did not want to become one of those well known Pop astronauts, who are lost in a solar system of non-belief, and who go by the name in the Silent scene of the Vacuum Lovers. The Vacuum Lovers are always saying to Silent Faces: 'Look the world is just full of expanse and non-belief. Look...'

The convicted lover of vacuums at our table in the Subconscious Cafe, Trotsky girl, looked as if she had been forced on non-belief, and thereafter understood how to slip and drift into more vacuums - what a girl. Just then she began to stare at me as if to say, 'Go on, then, Silent Face, make a brilliant speech about how good this new society is of yours.'

However, as luck had it, at that moment an old man came into the cafe surrounded by beautiful Pop fans. Trotsky girl knew him, and in a voice full of praise she said to the girl with no name, 'See him over there with the biker's jacket on and the gold medallion. He's one of the Legion Lovers.'

Brian awoke at once from his night thoughts. Any challenge it seemed to his macho image must be at least taken with open eyes. With cautious words he asked Trotsky girl all about the Legion Lover.

'Where does he live?'

'What does he do?'

'Does he ever go to the Silent Bars in town?'

'What age is he?'

'What does he think about the new generation?'

All the answers came back to Brian from Trotsky girl, as if from a hidden world. Trotsky girl managed to balance her admiration for the Legion Lover inside secret cynicism. When she spoke she tried to choke the male man Brian with it. As I have said before, the Subconscious Cafe is a very strange place, indeed.

Clare's Silent Face looked at me from across the cafe table. I don't think she was listening to the words on offer. And as I tried to inhabit her world, she for some reason let her eyes drift downwards towards the table and left me with all sorts of reasons and rhymes as to what she was thinking.

Not long after this I became aware of a malign spirit, and as I tried to trace this spirit as to where I had first come across it, I recalled a time when I was helping Clare move into a new flat in a fashionable area of town. The area was typically nouveau riche: where people dress like tramps and everyone's an artist. Well, once we had moved everything into the flat we both sat on the edge of a bed and chatted about what lay in store for a young Silent Face girl on the doorstep of tinsel town, when all of a sudden a man walked into the room like a cat on a hot tin roof. The man-cat had just heard the great news that Clare had managed to get flat 21, two doors down from his friend Lucy - who incidentally was a bloke. 'Oh, it's simply marvellous,' said the man-cat, as he strutted around the half-empty room.

Now it hit me then that this man thought life a game, and the game to be played out at the expense of others; and like the thought of murder and exile, the truculent situation made one cautious with words. We all had to somehow keep to our own ways - which were no ways at all. Although it was drama there was no friendliness, no communion, no love, just a sort of stealth and survival. The same atmosphere now, for some reason, circulated around our table in the Subconscious Cafe.

And it wasn't until the barman came out and whistled a Pop tune that it cheered us up, and gave us some sort of clue as to the wonder of Pop music. In fact, this Pop thing would not go away, and the same question at our table came up again and again: 'What is Pop?'

The question would come sometimes from Trotsky girl, and sometimes from the others: everyone wanting to show the difference between the old world and the new world for whatever reason.

'Come on, Lawrence, what do you think?' said Clare, sensing that I was becoming fed up with the whole thing.

Even though I was getting weary of it all, I replied in a strong tone, saying, 'The differences are great: for we accept Christianity as the foundation of society, governments govern on this principle, and the family is brought up with it.'

You see the reason I said this was because of the danger of the old Pop world creeping up on us again, and those terrible people who call themselves the Vacuum Lovers would make a comeback. They would talk about freedom as being the essence of society, constitutions and the like. For some reason when I had finished speaking everyone looked at Brian, but I knew he would avoid saying anything. Brian followed the maxim: if you want to succeed in life never talk about politics or religion. But no one can stay silent forever, not even the people who inhabit the Silent scene, and after Trotsky girl had said that life was basically a chimney and everything just went up it, Brian wanted to get back to a world of happy sensations. He said philosophically, 'People are just getting on with it,' and after a look around him, he added profoundly, 'I think everyone is basically the same.'

This brought the conversation to a close, and we all seemed to watch the bar woman switch off the table lamp near the front window. As she turned the light off I overheard voices coming from other tables, two and three, and they too were trying to work out the Pop thing.

'They say in Pop times everything was colourful and bright.'

'It wasn't really like that, my mother says that things were actually quite dull.'

'But, there was a buzz around, was there not?'

'What's a buzz?'

Number seven was our table number in the Subconscious Cafe, and we were now discussing the word surreal. Brian needless to say was getting into a bit of a tizzy over it, and the girls were lapping up the confusion. 'Okay,' said Brian, admitting he did not know what the word meant.

Trying to get him off the hook, I said, 'Did anyone go, last week, and see the surrealist exhibition in the Second Eye Centre?'

'Oh, come on, Lawrence, you don't like all that Pop art stuff, do you,' said Clare laughing. Then she cheekily added, 'I heard you were anti-Pop.'

The girl with no name laughed, then she looked around at the decorations of the Subconscious Cafe. There were monsters

bursting through walls, wild animals and leopard skin shields, and images from the silver screen. Just then I suddenly realised that she must have told Clare about the fun we had had on the dance floor of Disco Days.

It may have been late, but Clare and Trotsky girl were now deep in conversation about what was the greatest achievement of Pop culture. As I listened to them throw different ideas around, about this and that, I wondered if it would have been different if we had all dressed up for the Festival this year. We may well have left the history out.

Clare, Brian, and I, may have been the only ones tonight in the Subconscious Cafe to have worn biblical robes, but we never felt out of it.

When everything was quiet inside the Subconscious Cafe a drunk, in wild tight fitting Pop trousers and cheesecloth shirt, came staggering over to our table, shouting, 'Well, blow my head off, it's the Silent Faces. I tell you what; I'm a hocus-pocus Pop philosopher - that's what I am. Now can anyone here tell me anything about the subconscious?'

As the Pop philosopher stood at our table with his hands held open, looking for the answer, Clare's crucifix suddenly caught the light and sparkled. The Pop philosopher saw it and, as he wandered back to his table in the Subconscious Cafe, I heard him say to people as he passed them, 'Those Silent Faces, over there, are all right you know.'

For some reason the discussion after this turned to the old motorcar. Brian was always talking about the damn things. You see his father had been keen on them in Pop times, and when Brian was younger his father used to take him to the car museum to see the old cars.

Thankfully, our society has decided to do away with cars. There is no need for them due to the magnificent magnetic train system that goes everywhere throughout our land; although having said that one can still see the remains of the last era in the cities where old vehicles are used as taxis and ambulances. But no one can own a motorcar. There are a few odd eccentrics who protest

about this especially on bank holidays: 'We want our old cars back! We want a car world!' they shout when they gather in the main square in the centre of town.

Putting my point forward I said, 'I don't think Pop culture was born out of sentimentality; I think it was more the case of a beautiful illusion rather than some kind of metallic dream.'

Everyone laughed at my outrageous words. Then I told them about a Pop advert I once saw advertising blue jeans, that had for some reason people trying to escape down highway nineteen in a fast car as the world flew by them on all sides.

'Yes, thank goodness we don't live in a world where there are millions of cars,' said Clare, I think trying to annoy Brian.

'I would have liked a car,' replied Brian sadly.

At this point, Trotsky girl came out with a sensational point, 'You know they used to make love in them,' she said in an excited tone.

Clare threw her eyebrows to the ceiling indicating the strangest delights, then she said, 'My mother used to have a car, you know, but she seldom talks about it.'

'Maybe that's where she took all her boyfriends,' said Brian, who moved away quickly just in case Clare belted him.

'I wonder how Ian and Cathy are getting on at the Pop party,' I said trying to change the subject.

Brian nodded. He understood my anxiety. Ian would be all right and I hoped Cathy would too - but you could never be sure. Sometimes on Pop nights' people turn themselves into sybarites and snobs. Cathy was from a humble background, and I was not sure if she would see them for what they were.

'Oh, and what type of home do you come from?'

And it wouldn't stop there, articles of clothing would be examined. 'Oh, it's cheap.'

They say that even the new biblical robe is not beyond a nasty comment from an old reprehensible snob, in the Silent scene. Strange how you think about these sorts of things when you sit inside the Subconscious Cafe, isn't it.

Trotsky girl, however, kept things going at our table by saying, 'I haven't read anything controversial in the papers recently about the Vacuum Lovers, have you?'

When no one answered, she added, 'Do you think the press are losing faith in our new society?'

'Oh, I don't know,' said Brian as if exhausted, as he put his cup back down on its saucer.

Then just when things were getting quiet in the cafe, the doors suddenly burst open, and in came two old Pop stars in a song fight. The two men must have met somewhere at the Festival. The first one to come tumbling through the main door was a man of about fifty, with brushed back grey hair. The other man, although a little bit younger, looked pale and lifeless; he seemed to me to be the type who had lived on a diet of seaweed and oat cakes, for the past twenty years - maybe more. Fortunately for everyone concerned the barman was standing not faraway, next to the door, and he had the good sense and courage to separate them. 'Right what's the trouble then,' said the barman, in a governing voice.

'He stole my song!' said the older man with the grey hair.

The Veggie man looked a little afraid of the older man, but it didn't stop him from shouting back, 'He's talking rubbish! 'He's drunk!'

Clare who looked as if she was enjoying the song fight, turned to me at this point, and said, 'He's got charm, you know, the older man. I bet he was a lady's man when he was younger.'

She then made another wonderful comic face before asking me, 'Have you see them before, Lawrence?'

'No,' I said, slowly.

Then to my surprise I saw a couple take their seats at table nine in the cafe, and lo and behold it was Ian and Cathy. They both, however, gave the impression that they wanted to be alone, so I quickly turned my head hoping not to give them away. But just as I did this the girl with no name smiled at me, and she seemed to draw all my secrets from me, before drifting with her

own thoughts out of the cafe window. Some people say it is impossible to keep a secret in the Subconscious Cafe.

It was a strange night all right: Ian and Cathy, falling for each other, me meeting the girl with no name - in a way everything seemed too perfect. As I sat dreaming along with the girl with no name out of the cafe window, I noticed in the reflection of the late night window her face turn towards me, and there in her marble eye lay a crescent moon. She blinked once, then twice, then she pulled me to her lips. The Subconscious Cafe can be good fun, you know.

Back on stage the ex-Pop stars, or potential ex-Pop stars, were still arguing with each other. They really were a hard act to follow. Some people in the Silent scene reckon that they were influenced by men who wrote books on the mind and on the will. Others say that they just followed their own instincts; but if truth be told no one really knows, and I guess that no one really cares any more.

‘Right get out of here!’ cried the barman, as he threw the two of them out of the Subconscious Cafe.

Looking as comfortable as if she was sitting at home by the fireside, Clare said, ‘Does anyone want some more late night drinks?’

Everyone seemed in the mood for some more coffee except Trotsky girl; she said that she had to go home and look after her little girl. A few moments later Trotsky girl then left the Subconscious Cafe, without saying goodbye to anyone. It’s a strange place, as I have said before, is the Subconscious Cafe.

While we were waiting for the nice waitress to come back over, a late night bookseller entered the cafe and came straight towards our table.

‘Good evening, Silent Faces, would you like to buy some Pop books?’ said the tired looking man, in a kind voice.

The bookman dressed in a herringbone coat, tattersall waistcoat, and white shirt, had all the signs of a literary man. He smiled and said something about liking the modern fashions. Then as the man sat down beside me, he took off his fedora hat, and showed off the lovely texture of his black wavy hair, as it fell down

his back. Just at that moment, I noticed that all the books that he had with him were the same, and I managed to glimpse the title of one of them through his fingers: Mass Representations of the Pop World.

‘Can I look at one of them?’ asked Clare, as she put her hand forward towards the books in the middle of the table.

‘Where did you get them?’ she asked, looking up from the first page.

‘I print them,’ answered the bookman quietly.

This comment made the girl with no name sigh, ‘Ah.’

For some reason, Clare then asked him to confirm this, ‘Did you really print them?’

The bookman stared into his newly arrived coffee cup, and said solemnly, ‘Yes.’

‘How did the books come to be published?’ asked Brian, in a confident business voice.

The bookman hearing this question turned to Brian slowly and, full of sad reflection, he said, ‘Ah, well you see, Silent Face, I was left some money by an old aunt of mine and, one day when I was travelling through Glasgow, I spotted an old Pop press, and there and then decided to buy it, and ever since then I have been printing old Pop books, and trying to sell them in the pubs and clubs, to young and old alike, every year at the Pop Festival.’

‘Did you write them?’ asked Brian, who seemed very impressed by our friend the bookpeddler.

At this point, we all stared at the man with the long black wavy hair, and eagerly awaited his answer and possible fame.

‘Yes, I wrote them when the world was Pop. It seems so long ago now,’ lamented the bookman.

‘Please tell me more about your life, Mr Bookman,’ said the girl with no name.

‘Yes, please tell my Silent Face why they were written,’ I added.

The bookman seemed to relax at the invitation to speak about the past. And as he stared down at the Subconscious Cafe

table, he picked up a silver spoon and as he slowly stirred his coffee cup a story came back to him.

‘It seems just like yesterday, when I received my first publishing deal. Well, anyway, I was on my way to the printers, in good spirits, to do the final corrections to my book, when all of a sudden it all seemed to blow away. You see instead of going to the make-up room, I was told by Miss Murray at reception that Mr Christie would like to see me in his office. Mr Christie was the publisher and owner of BSC printing. When I came out of the lift on the fifth floor - the lift they say you know used to carry coffins to an undertaker before it became part of BSC property - there was Mr Christie waiting for me with petulant face and apology, “I am sorry we will not be publishing your book, now,” he said in his deep official voice. With words resounding in disbelief, I asked him, why not. He simply said in a worldly way: “Haven’t you heard, old boy, the Pop world is over. No one wants the damn thing any more.” Then he turned and went back into his wall to wall carpeted office, and shut the door.’

‘Could you not get them printed anywhere else?’ asked Clare, with assured logic.

‘No, it was no use lass, no one seemed interested in any representations of the Pop world any more.’

‘Representations of the Pop World,’ mumbled Brian, as his hand went out to touch the book in the middle of the table.

‘Please tell us more about the old Pop world?’ said the girl with no name.

The bookseller must have caught the fascination in her eyes, for he spoke tenderly: ‘Oh, the past is so much in my mind tonight, you cannot imagine how wonderful and bright the colours were in the time called Pop. Oh, yes, I was part of it all right, with my posters on my bedroom wall of Pop stars, and a record player that played old-fashioned vinyl records. And in that boyhood room I would lie on a blue carpet, that my folks had saved up hard to buy, and there I would listen to the sounds of my generation.’

Clare and the girl with no name both looked as if they were about to burst into tears. Together they both sighed, ‘Ah,’ again.

The storyteller, printer and publisher could see we were fascinated, but could not, I think, see the possibility of a sale. He said with a heavy heart, and low voice, 'Ah, well, I'd better get going, Silent Faces, it's not the Pop Festival every day, you know.'

And with no more words the bookseller finished his coffee, and he was gone.

'Good luck Mr Bookseller!' we all shouted, as he went out of the door of the Subconscious Cafe.

Not long after the bookseller had left, the cafe was suddenly uplifted by the latest fashion in the Silent scene. Three elegant looking men wearing - what the fashion magazines have termed - Church Clothes, entered the Subconscious Cafe. The three men, all dressed in wonderful black hats and long black coats, stood at the Subconscious Cafe bar.

'Do you know them?' Brian asked Clare, in a secret whisper.

Clare looked at them, then she replied as if bored, 'They look like foreign students to me.'

Suddenly, to our amazement Clare took it upon herself to invite them over to join us. The audience at our table all sat open mouthed as everyone watched the bold Clare make contact with them and in the silent transmission that followed, we all observed a Silent Face girl and three foreign men say something to each other. Presently, nameless and nomadic, the foreigners all arrived over at our table in the Subconscious Cafe.

Trying to make contact, I asked one of them, 'Where have you been tonight, then?'

Their faces all lit up with innocent contortions, as they looked at each other.

'Have you been to the Silent Bars in the city?' said the girl with no name.

Miming the words Brian drew his hand across his lips as if closing a zip. But his eyes were far too interesting to give them too many clues about our city Silent scene.

As she sat down Clare the courier I think got ready to take us all on a tour of roadside chapels from here to Florence - *Fa da brava cice'rone*.

‘There from Italy,’ she said.

We spoke a little Italian, then English followed. I asked the older of the three Italians if he liked the modern English composer Earlybus.

‘Oh, Earlybus,’ they all chanted. ‘He is very good.’

As they looked at our Silent Faces I could tell they had all led good lives in the land of theatre and art. And after shaking hands and nodding to each other, they introduced themselves as: Gianfranco, Stefano and Luca, all from Milan.

When Clare spoke to them again, they all shuffled like boys in their seats - trying to present themselves in the best possible light - and soon I understood that they were over here to study English. The Italians had all been given work permits, and they had all found part-time jobs in the local Pizza parlour in the west end. So they were feeling pretty much at home.

Luca acted with all the gifts of royalty and his English - once he got going - was quite good. ‘We have Silent Faces in Italy,’ he said laughing.

Luca was the handsome one of the three Italians, with sad memory eyes that could have said *peccato* all night.

The girl with no name did not know any Italian, so she asked me how to say, ‘Do you like Glasgow?’ in Italian.

So I told her, and she replied at once: ‘*Ti piace*, Glasgow?’ in teacher pupil fashion, to Luca.

Pleased to hear the sound of his mother tongue, Luca said, ‘Si, *moltissimo*.’

Brian and Clare may have laughed, but the girl with no name had passed the first test in the language game - with a little help from *io*. In fact, some people in the Silent scene say that the most important thing to learn is how to be friendly with foreigners; others say you should take care when dealing with people you don’t know. There is always a great debate going on as to which one of these two philosophies is best: affirm the will or apprehend it.

I had never before seen pizzas served in the Subconscious Cafe, and it made me wonder if the chef had put on a special

show just for our Italian friends. The Italians all tucked into the food as if there was no tomorrow or today. The only distraction was that they all took turns to look round for the wine waiter.

Brian, I could see was quite taken with the Italians, and he asked Luca in a tentative way, 'What are you studying here in Britain?'

There was a pause in the conversation at that moment, as a hand gently placed a bottle of wine from Orvieto on our table, then Luca replied, 'I'm studying the effects of the church during Pop times, but sadly I have only one month to go before my exams.'

Clare thought it proper to remind everyone at this point that religion was at crisis point during Pop times.

Luca looked at her as he struggled to reply in a foreign tongue, 'I believe it was,' he said, then after a sip of wine he added, 'you see at the beginning of Pop times a new sort of thing happened, a new culture came on the scene after two World Wars. Now the church, in my view, did not understand this new liberation movement; and as time went by a weaker dreary charismatic sect became prominent in religion, and it was that image that became stuck to the church for a while. Now most Pop people - especially the Pop stars of the day did not really understand what Christianity was all about. The Pop world in my view was not against the cross. However, they were in the early days, I believe, against all the old institutions: the Pop hippie is a good example, love and peace and all that man. Early Pop man simply dropped out of society, and it took a long time before people began to see the church as the most important building in the town again.'

Luca finished on this note and I thought he had given us a clear insight into his studies; and what he thought had been going on, as far as the church and religion were concerned during Pop times.

The girl with no name, who had been quiet since asking if they liked Glasgow, said, 'It's amazing how long the Pop world lasted, don't you think.'

Everyone agreed with a yes or a nod. Then Brian suggested that it was only our new generation that really understood the true meaning of things, and that our new society would be greater than the one before it: the boring old Pop world.

Gianfranco, who sat next to Clare, was darkly serious about things, and as he tapped his cigarette into a large ashtray in front of him, that was coloured with tigers and fishes, he spoke like a man in a long tunnel, 'There were a lot of people during Pop times who had a dog's understanding of life.' After looking at all our faces, he added in a strange foreign tone, 'The lower nature of man pulled them down and down.'

When he had finished speaking, Gianfranco reminded me of an eccentric man who thought you had to go through hell just to get through the day. It wasn't too long before he spoke again in that strange foreign tunnel voice of his, 'There were too many money men around during Pop times, for the faithful few,' he said this time in an angry tone.

The subjects thankfully lightened after this, and all our questions were as regards what they liked about the British way of life.

Stefano said honestly, 'Long live the British way of life.'

Luca replied, 'I like bacon and eggs, the social security system, and the way the money men dress in the city.'

'And I like the royal family, whisky and of course your fine water,' concluded Gianfranco.

The Italians all said that their country operated in a different way from other countries. 'Britain exposes the problems quickly, and is not afraid to deal with them,' said Stefano.

'But we too have many problems that never come to the public's attention,' I said wishing for a better balance.

'Well, I guess it's a case of we are all different, but the same,' said Stefano, laughing at the contradiction.

This is the sort of thing that goes down well in the Subconscious Cafe.

After this the conversation continued in many different ways, as regards Britain and the rest of the world, and it wasn't until,

Gianfranco started telling tales about, homeless sorts, murder in the night, sorrowful sex, and people being taken from their homes during the night to places patrolled by Gypsies and vagabond soldiers, that I started to wonder about foreigners. Luca and Stefano both nodded and said that they had heard about these things too.

More food arrived for the hungry Italians, and the table talk soon took side roads and paths we had all crossed before. 'What do you think of the educational love films?' asked Brian, the love machine, with a huge smile on his face.

'Oh, we have them too back home, and it is funny to see the workers go into them after they finish working,' said Gianfranco, who looked for confirmation of this from his other two friends.

Luca laughed and said, 'Yes, they always act as if they are going into some other shop or building, then they dive into see the love films.'

An older man at table ten got fed up waiting for his beer, and he shouted to the waitress, 'Where's that bloody beer got to!'

The man then went straight back to scooping up his late night haggis and neeps. All the Italians loved this, and they again said how much they loved our country.

Gianfranco was not so dark and mysterious about things now, and he told us that he was a great fan of Dante, and he would soon be giving a talk on him at the university, 'I must have met Dante in an earlier life, you know, for just before I left Italy I was told in a dream that I would meet my Beatrice here in Scotland.'

'She's here?' asked Clare, in an excited tone.

'Yes, I have met a young lady who has captivated my heart,' he said with a huge smile, on his pointed face.

Gianfranco then stared at the ceiling as if it were a Venetian skyline, where lovers danced to their own rhythms, as the night drew on weaving sad stories and Italian love songs to soothe their hearts.

'What is the girl's name?' asked the girl with no name.

Dante Gianfranco nodded west but looked to the east. Then he sighed, 'My destiny is it here or is it in the Riviera? You see, Silent

Faces, I have dreamed nine dreams where the only clue seems to be the eternal recurrence of this woman. Oh, Dante, you understood life, and how hard it could be.'

Luca and Stefano watched their friend and I think understood him, and at that moment tragedy was sent to wonder in expectation - just like a scene from Dante's great novel - and I must say the feeling in the Subconscious Cafe at this point was rather odd.

Gianfranco looked into his wine. Then he turned to me with a mad expression on his face, 'Silent Face, do you know, Beatrice?' he said, and he brought his eyes together.

After a few seconds he repeated the question, 'Do you know Beatrice?'

'No,' I said stunned and startled. Then I enquired, 'Who the hell is she?'

'She is the most wonderful woman in fiction and in life,' said Dante Gianfranco.

'Oh, right,' I said, then added something about reading about her at school, 'but that was years ago.'

Stefano spoke to Gianfranco in Italian and only then did he seem to come out of some sort of subconscious dream.

'I can see you're missing home,' said Clare to him.

'Yes, I certainly am,' he admitted.

Dante Gianfranco then stretched his hand across the table and gently squeezed Clare's hand. Clare's face incidentally went the same colour as the crimson Subconscious curtains.

'Well, I tell you what,' said Dante Gianfranco, sitting back looking at his very own audience. 'Who would like to come to the next Dante Alighieri Society meeting, and hear me speak about the great man. 'Phew, I told you the Subconscious Cafe is unreal.

And hear is another one. Down the spiral stairway in conversation were two Unisexers. Unisexers in the Silent scene wear the same clothes as each other, and have identical hairstyles. And of course this makes society wonder which one is the bitch and which one is the boy - sex is their secret you see.

The Unisexers have to take care in the cities these days: for in post Pop times if any of the he-men, on their way back from the gymnasium, spot them they usually grab them and pull down their pants. Then they shout to the crowd - that invariably gathers for these sorts of events - which one is the bitch and which one is the boy.

Luca noticed them kissing each other, and he shouted in an excited tone, 'Look Unisexers!'

Luca's loud voice made the Unisexers slip down the spiral stairs of the Subconscious Cafe like little children. As they disappeared I heard one of them say, 'Do you think they know which one is the bitch,' then they both laughed.

Luca grew rather excited about the Unisexers, and he spoke about the ones he had come across back home, 'You see them on the beaches and in the bars; they always dress in fantastic styles,' he said with a little smile.

The unsure images that brought no confirmation about origins, beliefs, and much more besides, led our discussion into the wonder world of yesteryear. We talked about a movement, who had existed before the Pop world, and how they would invite themselves into good Christian folks lives; and we discussed how they would steal and withdraw from contracts and do all sorts of low things. Someone at our table in the Subconscious Cafe said that they can still be seen in and around the Silent scene today: 'Yes, the horrible people who back-stab, who break hearts, and who cause misery wherever they go. Yes, they are known in the Silent scene as the Deadly Deceivers.'

Since we were all looking a bit worried, I said to my friends around the Subconscious Cafe table, 'The world is full of good people and rogues - such is life.'

As everyone knows towards the end of the Pop world unemployment was rife throughout the land, some people in the Silent scene reckon it was because the spirit of the culture had gone. Others supposed that it was because what sparks man's mind was slightly dulled. Whatever it was of course let the Recession-knights take over and make a killing on anything they could get

their hands on: 'Doom, gloom, low inflation, new technology, no love, no hope, not enough work, not enough skill, not enough money, not enough hands,' were the sorts of things they said to gain an advantage over the workers in Pop times.

The Italians all spoke in a way as if they knew everyone who had been made redundant by the group, known in the Silent scene, as the Recession-knights.

Luca said, 'I heard about a man who threw a punch in the workplace, and he never worked again.'

Gianfranco said, 'I heard about a man who drank too much and the Recession-knights finished him off for good.'

As more details followed we all tried to understand Pop life, and the men and women who made their living by promoting the ways of a recession: their thoughts were directed towards mass profits for the few. They had little concern for the many who did not possess the gift of the new business spirit: in short they tried to rule the world with doom and gloom, and of course new technology.

Stefano agreed with me when I said that the Recession-knights were capitalists gone wrong, and that Pop people could do little else but sell out.

Clare, thinking about the advent of new technology in Pop times, wondered, 'Yes, what do people do when they are told that machines are more important than they are.'

'Start a new culture,' I suggested.

Then I thought of all the great men and women who must have done just that, and influenced an age at one time or another: the false messiah, a butchered-faced man standing in a field shouting to peasants telling them that the land belonged to them, while the peasants screwed up their faces wondering who was more obscure, the politician or the burning hot sun; nevertheless, I had to admit to myself, revolution has to start somewhere.

I noticed Luca was still angry; for his face was shot through with contradictions. You see the Recession-knights, along with the Vacuum Lovers, had devastated the world during Pop times. Pop people were it seemed fooled by the philosophy that not everyone

should have the right to a job. Luca maintained: 'Society is gauged by faith and faith alone. Art may be a barometer, money may be an indicator; but like the old Greek philosopher once said if a man shouts for help in a city and no one hears him, then you are building your cities too big.'

The Subconscious Cafe is always a great place for thoughts like this. Outside the cafe the rain lashed the windows, then all of a sudden it faded away, and somewhere out in the distance a chorus came from a new world: 'All epochs will pass, but the foundation will remain,' I thought I heard it say.

My mind then drifted back to our new society, then I thought about the never ending movements of people flowing here and there, and something made me say to myself, 'If fortune is fate, then this new society of ours will be glory workers with proud faces. The men and women of this generation will be ready to help the unfortunate, the destitute, and the poor.'

Some words then came to me that I thought appropriate, as regards metamorphosis and change: Into the night drifts day, and the sun and moon can be seen together once more; but no one knows if there will be clouds to cover this day, or that, in a new dawn.

As I stared out of the cafe window, Luca asked me, 'What do you work at Lawrence?'

It took me a little time to answer, for the rain lashed the windows again, 'Oh, I'm working for a trade union studying the history of industrial relations,' I said.

All the Italians looked interested, and so to my surprise did Clare and Brian - who never really asked me much about my job. In fact, the only one who seemed comfortable with my career was the girl with no name. So presently I put my thoughts out like a story which of course they are. 'Well, let's see, I want you all to imagine men and women at the beginning of industrialisation, standing in groups trying to appoint leaders who will help them with their problems: problems like pay and conditions, and how much time do they have with their family and friends. The men and women ask questions like: "Why was that man sacked? Who is

responsible for this?” and so on. Now the women hold their children in their arms and need clothing and shelter from the storm. Right, now I want you to imagine people in today’s society and their questions like: “What day does my pay go into the bank? When do I get my holidays? Why was that man sacked?” That’s why we have trade unions.’

Clare cried sharply, ‘Maybe so, Lawrence, but you have to admit that during Pop times the unions connived with the Recession-knights, and that is why a lot of people found it difficult to find a job in the market place; for the workers got into bed along with the management, and consequently they fell out with each other like churlish lovers.’

‘Quite so,’ I replied, then quickly added, ‘yes, in my opinion, they should have banned overtime. This would have given more people the chance to work, and brought harmony between the two factions: workers and management.’

After this the topics became a little trapped and tired, and Clare thank goodness with perfect timing said, ‘Now we all know, don’t we, that we are not allowed to spend too long in the Subconscious Cafe - so we’d better get going.’

Everyone agreed and we said goodbye to the Italians and headed out of the Subconscious Cafe.

8 Night Adventure

As we all walked along the late night street we watched anxiously for a small amber light of availability and hire to appear. It was all too apparent the Festival was over for another year.

‘Look how sad the faces are,’ said Brian, as he watched some of the Festival people head home. My Silent Face friend then shouted at the top of his voice, ‘Taxi!’ and whistled a very loud whistle.

Thankfully, an electric powered taxi that was all alone on Union Street winked at us, and within seconds pulled to the kerb. Once inside Clare and Brian pulled down the window, and with late night voices my two Silent Face friends wished us good luck.

‘Good night, Silent Faces!’ I shouted back.

The taxi winked once more, then it moved off through the Festival streets, taking Brian and Clare home to the south side of the city. Shortly after this the girl with no name and I went in search of the magnetic train station, which lay behind the many large buildings of justice and commerce. And you know, as we walked along everything became so otherworldly, like in magazines and movies. The first people we came across were road sweepers, and as they came towards us, with their brushes held high above

their heads, I could see in their eyes the belief that the world was the same everywhere: rich and poor were just people.

The youngest of the group was a lad not long out of school and, as he walked by us, something told me that this lad led a simple life: good is good, bad is bad, there was never a question in this young man's eyes of who or why. The next to pass were men from the world of paper and pens (probably out late because of the Festival). The Paper and Pen people never looked at anybody as they headed home; however their body movements told me that they counted a lot on luck and form - just like the financial world where they worked during the day.

Not long after this we entered the expensive shopping mall where during the day the rich and famous, in the Silent scene, go shopping for diamonds and pearls. Inside the complex we watched a black security van move up to the bank door.

'Right back her up, Jack!' shouted a hidden man from the back of the van.

Three other men presently appeared dressed in the latest protective security suits, and acted as if lunatic bank robbers were hiding somewhere inside the station. The girl with no name thought them funny, 'You would think it's their money their unloading,' she said laughing at them.

The manager came out from the bank where I imagined all day and all night he counted the money, 'Keep her straight!' someone shouted.

Presently, the van moved inside the bank as if it were really a part of the building. Then strange shadows showered themselves down the wall, and the van that had once stood outside the bank, inside the shopping mall, disappeared. Just then, through the thick wall, I heard the bank manager's voice. He said in a cheerful tone to his staff, 'Well done lads, now let's get all this lovely money unloaded.'

At the train station we waited for some information about the special late night magnetic trains; and when word finally came from the loudspeaker about a train going somewhere to a place I had heard off - but had never been to - the girl with no name said

to me, 'Lawrence, since it's the Pop Festival, do you fancy a drink back at mine?'

As I watched her give a guarded nod, to her own question, I replied, 'Yes, why not.'

And as we walked, I asked her where she came from but, being a simple kind of complex girl, she parried the question. Then without warning she took my hand, and we ran towards the platform on the far side of the station.

The station was full of late night Festival people, and I could see most of them were still dressed up in the old fancy Pop style, looking absolutely worn-out. As we ran, unfortunately, I took my eye off the route, and crashed straight into a preacher man, who was wheeling a large suitcase through the station.

'Oh, sorry,' I said, stopping to see if he was all right.

The preacher man looked at me over his round glasses, as he straightened his suitcase back onto its little wheels. Then with an understanding voice he said, 'Oh, it's okay, Silent Face,' and he smiled at me, as he glanced up and down my biblical robe.

Finally arriving at the platform that could have come straight from the pages of fiction, I stood with the girl with no name, and we waited for the next magnetic train to arrive. Just then two outrageous Pop men dressed in drag strolled by, and when what looked like managers from the catering trade - who were standing in front of us - looked at them, one said to the other in a funny voice, 'Would you look at these two Charlie.'

The two men then laughed, and agreed with each other that anything went in Pop times. Then out of the blue, as if someone had signalled to someone to cheer us all up, a drunk came staggering out onto the platform, dancing just like the men in Disco Days. When he came near to us I listened to the baby Pop disco verse he was singing. 'Do, do, do, it's all right, Boo, boo, boo, you know it's right, Woo, woo, woo, so let's not fight...'

Inside the train we found seats at the far end of the carriage, and once there I gazed out of the window to the centre of the station, where I remembered that at the end of every year children gather there to sing hymns and carols, to the people coming and

going to and from a place called home. And as I stared at the small statue in the middle of the station, I felt the need for a place called home; and this in turn prompted me to make up my own quotation, and say it to the girl with no name: 'Home is a place to escape from the push and pull world of today.'

To this the girl with no name replied with a quotation from an adventurer: 'Home is the sailor, home from sea,' (R. L. Stevenson) then she smiled one of those wonder smiles at me.

Not long after this the lights dimmed and the next thing I knew was that we were all heading out of the station on the main line to nameless places. And on our side of the glass that held the night flight I noticed the heads bob up and down, and me the tired traveller slipped into a sort of disco dream, where nameless folks were all dancing in a huge disco. When I awoke - probably only minutes later - I noticed on the opposite seat from me a white Pop Rastafarian man. As we crossed over the bridge the Rasta man started to sing and tell funny stories about his life.

'Jah man, it's what is called groovin love. Jah man, I can show you, but I can't tell you, Jah man.'

I asked the white Rasta man, who was about forty and ever so funny from head to foot, general questions about his life and about his work. And as I listened to his answers, I was impressed by his philosophy, 'Jah man, there's only one love man, you got to understand, there is only one love. Jah man.'

After this he shook my hand and came forward with blue flickering eyes. Then he sat back once more and hummed his song about one love.

Arriving at the mystery spot we stepped from the magnetic train into a light drizzle of rain, somewhere on the south side of the city, and something inside of me said, 'Wake up, Silent Face, this is a very strange place indeed.'

As we walked down and out of the lonely station - even though it was dark - I could see no names, no posters, no flowers. In fact, I could see nothing here at all to indicate pride, or self-regard. It seemed a godforsaken place. Soon we went out onto a road where houses and skyscrapers made the landscape strange

like a stranger. At this point the girl with no name made a facial gesture to indicate the direction we had to go in. However, even as we travelled up to where the shops and the pubs were situated, the area would not reveal itself to me. People were certainly living here all right; but it was as if they had refused to get to know the area, and in turn the area had turned its back on them. With this flux of thought I ran my finger along a metal rail outside on the pavement, and asked her tentatively, 'Who do you live with?'

She answered, as if rehearsed, 'I live with my father, but he's away abroad just now to see some of his mates.'

The girl with no name then walked towards a high rise flat and pushed a heavy glass door open. Presently, we walked into a lift, then we stepped out onto a landing, and there we stood outside a door that I noticed had no name on it. The girl with no name slipped a key into the door, and suddenly a cat came out to a most precious welcome. 'There, there, now what's wrong with you. I'll never leave you alone again,' she said, and scooped up the cat with a kiss.

A dark hallway with doors set on each side like a small hotel appeared, and the girl with no name welcomed me inside, 'Go inside, Lawrence,' she said evenly.

After she had switched on a light a small working-class room came to life. Picking up a bottle of wine that was lying on a table near to the living room door, she said, 'Would you like some wine.' Then she added gleefully, 'I bought it specially for the Pop Festival?'

'Yes, that sounds fine,' I said.

The girl with no name then headed left to where I imagined the kitchen to be. And as I waited for her to come back, I took in the room with its strange objects: woodcuts of oriental women carrying water, and lots of photographs of Pop people in way-out clothes, silly old men showing off their guns, from the land of genocide and dreams. I also observed a large book on the coffee table titled: The Last Moderns, and when the girl with no name came back, clinking glasses, she noticed that I had picked it up, and was now leafing through it.

‘That’s my grandmother’s book, she was a famous photographer during Pop times,’ she said proudly.

Seeing this celebration of the old culture going a bit too far, I asked her cheekily, ‘Was your dad a Pop star?’

The girl with no name did not answer, and she gave me a look that could have ended our evening there and then. She then indicated with her eyes the photograph she liked of an old woman in Pop clothes, who was standing outside a discount store, and she cried, ‘Ah, isn’t she lovely.’

As she put the glasses down on top of the coffee table, next to the wine, she added, ‘I like the old Pop style. I know it’s old-fashioned and all that, but I seem to fit in somewhere with the imagery. I guess I’m just an old hippie at heart.’

Wondering about all that loud music and car culture, I asked her, ‘How do you think people met each other in Pop times?’

Probably like us,’ said the girl with no name, cleverly.

‘But Pop people couldn’t talk to each other,’ I said thinking about the club Disco Days.

‘We can’t talk to each other either when we go to the Silent Bar in the Silent Hour,’ answered the girl with no name.

‘Yes, that’s true,’ I conceded.

So we drank some wine and we told each other Pop stories, as if we were sitting round a campfire. And you know at times I swore I could see the figures we were talking about in the fake flames in the living room fire.

‘Do you know any Pop poems?’ I asked, seeing how enthralled by it all she was.

‘Yes, I like this one,’ she said. ‘Cry, cry, she’s just a little girl with blue eyes, who says love’s quite a thing, but she’s designed for a new world, cry cry...’

We both laughed at the Pop poem and wondered why they wrote the way they did. I mentioned an article I had read in the morning paper written by a chap called Esoteric Derek: ‘He said there was a creeping madness around in Pop times, and he thought it could be traced back to the origin of the First World War. Esoteric Derek said that Pop people looked at history and

said: “Well, if all you can do is kill each other, then we shall try something different.” And this is the reason Pop people worshipped vacuums and Pop idols; for them nothing was true, for them life was a dream of freedom and expanse, rather than salvation.’

When I finished speaking there was a hush around the room with no name, and it seemed to me as if at any moment the last generation would all come down the chimney screaming Pop slogans: “Get out of your mind! Get out of your head! Do it!”

‘How do you deal with it?’ asked the girl with no name. ‘Christianity has the answer,’ I replied.

The girl with no name not long after this started to drink quite fast, and I noticed a strange purpose in her eyes as she held her drink in her chubby hand; thankfully as the clock on the mantelpiece chimed 3 a.m. she relaxed, and we settled down at the fire and talked more about the old Pop era once again.

After seeing an old photograph on top of the little drum table, I asked her, ‘Did your father have a car in Pop times?’

The girl with no name, with a sort of forgotten voice, answered, ‘Oh, yes, my stepfather had a big car, and he still misses it, you know; he has never got used to the new transport system. You see, all his life he had a car, then all of a sudden along comes our new generation and changes all that.’

The girl with no name nodded at me like a madam, as if she was responsible for the change. Then she spoke again, this time with clear distant words, ‘I remember when I was a little girl daddy used to take me to see my uncle, who lived over on the other side of the motorway; and you know looking back my uncle seems quite an interesting character. He used to be a session musician for all the top Pop bands. When we got to his flat, he would take me into his studio and switch on the synthesiser, and I would sing into the big fluffy microphone - it was really great fun.’

Looking for a song I asked, ‘Are you a good singer?’

To which she replied, ‘Not bad, pitch perfect.’

‘Is he still alive this nearly famous uncle of yours?’

‘Oh, yes, he went to live in England with a woman from the West Indies.’ The girl with no name laughed a girl’s laugh, then out of a vision of the past she spoke again about her youth, and how she used to visit her musical uncle. ‘I always remember the drive to his house in the old motorcar. I would sit in the back seat and draw signs on the window. When it came to the wooded area, I imagined that I would hide there with a secret lover in a big tree house. We had hidden tunnels, so that we could escape from the big bad world when people came round.’

When the girl with no name had finished painting a childhood dream all over my face, we both stared at each other wondering about where everything is quiet and gentle down in the glade. After this we drifted with the friendly past and maybe present, then my hand stretched out and touched her canvas face, and I watched her eyes softly lose my own reflection.

A little later as we came apart the feeling of loneliness was present, and it was at this point I watched the girl with no name change. Something must have tugged at her and sent her close to the edge. It was hard to see why she was going adrift - but adrift she was going in colours of grey and ivory. She started to drink quickly, after the wine had been polished off the girl with no name brought out a bottle of brandy, and offered me a drink - not at all like the young lady I met earlier on in the evening.

‘Would you like another drink,’ she said pouring herself a large one.

‘No thanks,’ I said, thinking of going.

After she gulped down the first measure, another one followed. Then she spoke as if hurt by something, ‘You said something earlier on that was true. I think the same way as my stepfather does: the Pop way.’

She then stopped speaking and drank back another measure before looking at herself in a drunken reflection in the glass she was holding.

‘Do you like all that Silent Bar stuff, changing colours, biblical robes, and all that?’ she said angrily.

I smiled in the hope that the grudging feeling would soon evaporate, but nothing seemed further from the truth. The girl with no name just sat staring into her glass as if overcome by events elsewhere in time and space. A truly trained spoilt look followed, then her look turned to hate.

‘Do you normally go home with girls who have no name?’ she spurted, before taking another drink.

I did not know what to say to this question: for a fear inside me said that pushing this girl this way or that could prove fatal. Another drink followed, and this time her young system bolted. Signs of distress ensued - messages were clearly being sent and not heeded.

‘Come on you have had too much to drink,’ I said, trying to take the glass away from her.

As I came forward, I observed a coldness come into her dark eyes as if she did not want to see anything any more, and as I placed a gentle hand on hers she fell to the floor unconscious. Panic gripped my soul and all I could hear was a voice inside my head saying, ‘Where’s the damn phone! Where’s the damn phone!’

As I turned around dizzy in search of communication, I thankfully caught sight of a cream coloured telephone, next to the sideboard, not far from the door. In a hurry trying to get there I comically bumped into the girl with no name who was lying half-naked on the floor. I murmured to myself, ‘Come on, Lawrence, she won’t mind if you get her to the hospital on time.’

‘EMERGENCY SERVICE,’ said the operator.

‘Ambulance please,’ I replied quickly.

‘What is your address?’ asked the cool woman on the other end of the phone.

At this point my mind went blank, and I asked the operator if she would hold on till I ran to the opposite flat.

On arrival, I pressed and pressed the buzzer trying to make it say: ‘EMERGENCY! EMERGENCY! come on, hurry up, some girl with no name is lying on the floor and could be slipping into the other side soon, EMERGENCY! EMERGENCY!’

About three or four minutes later, I heard a woman's voice, saying: 'Who can it be, at this time of the night, Bert?'

I pressed the buzzer again and this time the hall light went on. Then the door thankfully opened. Right away, I spoke to the man who was dressed in an old-fashioned blue and white pair of cotton pyjamas - who strangely looked like a werewolf - about the girl with no name who was lying on the floor in the adjacent apartment.

'What's the address of the flat, mister?' I said with panic mixed with horror in my voice.

'It's 146 Bounty Street,' he replied, to me in a voice I sensed had murder and caution mixed in its tone.

Just as I was about to run back to the phone, Mrs Werewolf came out onto the cold night landing, and she turned and said to her husband, 'Oh, look it's one of those funny folk who wear biblical robes.'

Mrs Werewolf standing on the landing made me think that she crept around all night in that light blue flowery nightgown of hers looking for folk like me. And I tell you I was glad to get back to the other flat again, and to a girl with no name.

'It's 146 Bounty Street,' I said, out of breath to the operator.

After putting down the phone I went in search of a blanket for the girl with no name; however as it happened when I got to the hallway the doorbell rang, and there stood Mr and Mrs Werewolf again. 'Is everything all right in there son?' said Mr Werewolf slowly.

I told him that hopefully an ambulance would soon arrive and everything would be okay. Just as the elderly couple were about to go back into their house, I shouted to them. 'Oh, just wait a minute!' Then I asked them: 'Do you know the name of the family that lives here?'

The elderly couple turned around and looked at each other, then they both shook their heads. 'Sorry, we don't know, son. We thought the flat was empty,' said Mr Werewolf.

As they went back inside, my heart sighed at the thought of the mystery girl, who was out for the count on the floor in the

room with no name. Not long after this I hurried back with the blankets in hand. It seemed a while as I waited up there by the window for the ambulance, and just when I was about to phone again, thankfully a modern electric ambulance came into view and pulled up outside the tower block. I immediately opened the window and shouted in a loud voice.

‘It’s up here!’

‘The sixth floor!’

The driver pulled something from the vehicle and then the two men ran into the block of flats. Presently, they arrived outside the flat with no name, and to my surprise the men did not look like hospital staff at all. They may have worn uniforms, but I thought they looked more like fishermen or bank clerks - certainly not men who take girls away and revive them.

‘In here,’ I said pointing the way.

Just when I was about to close the door, Mr and Mrs Werewolf popped their heads out onto the landing again. Mr Werewolf said in a ghostly tone, ‘Everything all right son?’

‘I hope so,’ I replied through mixed up thoughts, and a thousand woes.

The two ambulance men bent over the girl with no name, and after turning her to what they called the recovery position, they then had her on a stretcher heading for the hospital, somewhere in the city. As they headed out of the flat with no name and into the lift, one of the ambulance men turned round and said, ‘Stay where you are, son. The police are on their way.’

The next time the doorbell rang it was two police officers: one man and one woman. ‘And what have we got here, then?’ said a very technical young looking male officer, as he looked up and down my biblical robe.

The police woman moved by me and asked in a droll voice, ‘Which room was it the girl passed out in?’

I pointed to the front room where I could still see a girl with no name lying there. And I remembered all the fun we had had. The policewoman walked inside the room and stood there for a

moment. Then she said, 'Ah, so this is where it took place, mummmmm...'

When the woman officer came back from the front room she stood just inside the doorway, and the interrogation went as follows, with all the questions being asked by her male colleague.

'Is this your house?'

'No.'

'Whose house is it, then?'

'Eh, it's the girl's.'

'What's her name?'

'I don't know.'

'Where did you meet her?'

'I met her at a Pop party.'

'And what happened then?'

'Then we came back here.'

'And?'

'And she knocked herself out with booze.'

The very technical male officer did not look surprised as he scribbled one or two things down into his notepad, that I noticed had a sticker of Superman on the front of it.

He then contacted his sergeant at the local police station on his radio, 'Hello, serge, could you please check a few things on the computer for me?'

Lucky for me, I had my credit card and library ticket in my wallet, and I gave him both cards.

The very technical officer yawned, took the cards, and then relayed the information down the radio. And as he waited for the voice on the other end to speak back to him, he came forward and pushed his face close up to mine, and with coarse breath he muttered, 'Well, Silent Face, or whatever they call you funny young things in robes these days, did you, or didn't you?'

This made me laugh, for his technical eyes showed the signs of a thousand tricks. Thankfully, a voice just then came over his radio confirming my name and address. 'Right, Silent Face, we will be in touch with you,' said the technical male looking officer.

The officer then pointed to the door with no name, and let me go. Outside in the early morning rain, I ran as fast as I could trying to burn off the feeling that I felt could destroy me. And fortunately as I ran the volume and intensity seemed to weaken - although the images from way back and beyond still came after me. I suddenly wondered if I had killed the girl with no name, just like killing a wasp fearing its sting, 'How far did I push her into the past? Oh God, I never knew her name. All I remember is a Pop world haunting and hunting me, trying to justify itself in the present. I hope she will be all right.'

On the magnetic train I sat down, and was thankful for the young lad who tugged at my robe, saying, 'Have you got a light, Silent Face?'

The other lad who was with him stared at me and, as I searched my robe for a light, he said in a wondering voice, 'Hey, Silent Face, why didn't you dress up for the Pop Festival this year?'

As I thought about this question through a blank mind, I noticed that he was wearing drainpipe trousers.

'Oh, we thought we'd just go as normal this year,' I said, and I handed him a small book of matches that had the cover of Disco Days on it.

Then I listened to their conversation about some Pop party they had been to, down near the docks: 'It makes you wonder if people did dress like that in Pop times. Okay they did in films; but did you see that woman with the thing on top of her head that she called a bipperty-bopperty hat,' said the friend of the lad, who was wearing drainpipe trousers.

They both laughed until the one in drainpipes said reflectively, 'I'll be glad to get out of these Pop clothes and back into my robe that changes colour in the light - that's for sure.'

The young lads, I noticed, got off at Queen Street and ran along the platform and up the stairs - no doubt much the wiser about the old Pop world than before.

As the magnetic train pulled away an old man sat down beside me, and one look at him told me that he was Pop through and through. The old man asked me where the train was going to,

then he lamented about the Festival and the past. He then told me that when he lived in London, about fifty years ago, he became quite famous: 'Yes, I was a Pop star,' he said with a smile.

This information made me look at him again, and this time I noticed that although his manner was young, his eyes were very old indeed. Naturally, I was excited at meeting someone from the real world of Pop, and said so.

He asked me many questions about life in the modern world: 'Do you think garments that change colour in the light will be in fashion next year? Where do you go dancing? What do you think of the old Pop world?' and so on.

But all this seemed irrelevant: for he had celebrated his very own Pop Festival - many years ago - and by the way he looked as if he had enjoyed it.

I asked him about his music, and as he spoke I think he must have thought me to be a journalist and gave me a ghosted version. The most important fact it appeared was not to let the story line slip. He also told me about his first love, and as he spoke I watched him drift away back into the past.

He said, as the train entered a tunnel, 'Being an artist it is best to organise everything yourself, and when you play all around the world your daily life becomes art - strange that isn't it.'

He then gazed outwards and his eyes portrayed past childish games, before speaking again, 'It was in the last days of Pop, I was asked to play for the cream Poppers at some big charity event in the capital. This was right at the time of the great Pop schism, when things had drifted so faraway from the early days of Pop, that no one could recognise what they understood Pop to be any more. Well, I remember I was on stage going through the motions of stardom, when all of a sudden I caught sight of a woman in the crowd, whom I had once been in love with. And even though this woman had not loved me, a simple life came back to me. You know the sort of thing, going for walks, sitting by the fire. So I decided there and then that I had had enough of these plastic people, and would now play the music I liked. I told the band to play the real songs of Pop that everyone knows and loves.'

The famous man stopped speaking and I thought he had finished his story, but even though he looked tired he continued after a puff on his cigarette.

‘The fat faces of Pop did not like this, and they began booing, but we played on till the last song, and then left the stage.’

He paused again, then added, ‘However, as it happened, in my dressing room later on, I felt faint and fell to the floor - it had all been too much for me. But when I came round I noticed things were very different indeed. The professional people were already starting to plot my downfall. So the next day I told the press that I thought the Pop world was over. You see at this point in time there were two opposing groups: one thought the Pop world would go on and on forever, and the other thought that it had had its day and it would be better if the young started a new culture.’

He also remembered in his dream that he saw a multitude of people with crosses on their foreheads, and in his worry and despair he ran to see if he too had a cross on his forehead. Some people he met told him that they carried no mirror with them, others ignored him as he ran through arcades and precincts. ‘Have you a mirror to see a cross?’ he said to everyone.

Mercifully, he came upon a beggar packing up for the night and slipping shining glass into his rucksack. The beggar who had lost everything except his faith, smiled at him telling him that everything would transcend.

‘I will give you a mirror sir, but please don’t steal it. It was a present from me mother,’ said the beggar in a humble voice.

The ex Pop star put the mirror to his face, but could see no cross. Even though all through his life he had seen and heard the message, he stared and stared in disbelief. Suddenly, he looked round and there way out in the distance he saw a cross on top of a church and he started to run towards it; however as he did so a procession of ghosts and ghouls followed him trying to put him off. ‘This way, that way, we know what you like,’ they sang. Then sensuous visions appeared, ‘Oh, come, come, lover of smooth things, come, come.’

The ex-Pop star was nearing the end of his story, and with nerves like steel he steadied himself, 'Suddenly, the darkness was lifted by the light. It was just like an end of term sports day at school when you are running towards the winning line, and you can see all your family and friends in the crowd. Peter and Paul appeared and so did Luther and Augustine. Then I awoke in the new world.'

At this point the ex Pop star got off his seat, shook my hand, and with a smile said, 'Well, my generation maybe over Silent Face - but your era is just beginning - so good luck.'

When he had gone I thought a lot about what he had said, and it dawned on me that tragedy is always followed by resignation, then finally contentment. And as I wondered about these sorts of wonderful things, I drew my finger down the train window in the sign of a cross, and there outside in the passing world was a church with a story to be told. This church during Pop times had been bought by entrepreneurs, and turned into a bar. However, after the Pop world had ended it had thankfully been restored to a place of worship. This shows the difference in the old and the new world.

In fact, even the old science magician, who in Pop times was hailed as some kind of priest, is not the same driving force in the new world. You see our new society is built on faith. Why during Pop times people turned away from the church, I do not know. Was it the dreary born again movements? Or was it because of philosophical vacuums? I suppose no one will ever know. All that one can say is that the Pop world had to go the same way as all the other eras: the Baroque, the Renaissance and a thousand others. No one can say though that the Pop world was not interesting with its music and images from the silver screen. They had the creative ability that every era has to send people from the heart to the page to the never-never land - the wonder of illusion: for them it was the Pop illusion. At the next station I got off the train and quietly walked home.

9 Home

On the way home, I met four friends, dressed in fancy Pop clothes, who were all coming back from some Pop Festival events organised in the local area.

‘What was it like in the city?’ asked Lesley.

After wondering where to start, I replied, ‘Well, it was quite good.’

Seeing that I had not dressed up this year, James asked, ‘Did you go to the Silent Bars, before the Festival?’

So with a smile I told them all about the evening’s events, as if I had been the only one in the world to have had such a night.

James, usually one to start the conversation with, ‘Is that right,’ and end it by saying, ‘No, you’re joking,’ said nothing.

He listened like the others as I told them about: booksellers and poets, moony dancers, and mayhem, people and portraits, the Pop Phantom, Dante Gianfranco, a land of genocide and dreams, muscle men and dwarfs, singers and speakers, Knights of recession, Rude Boys, Virago Girls, Fish Tank Intellectuals, and Pop people - lots of Pop people.

‘You’ve had quite a time,’ said Lesley, who looked a little concerned.

After this we said goodbye, and we all hoped that it wouldn't be as long as the next Pop Festival until we met again. Just at the top of the hill the morning moon came into view and, as I stared at the well known face of the man on the moon, something told me that his face had been around for a very long time. And as I rubbed my eyes, I suddenly remembered that going to the moon was the greatest achievement of the Pop world. Before I opened the front gate to go inside my house, I sighed: 'Yes, of course, the conquered Pop moon, how that great astronaut changed the world with one small step.'



Painting: Art Balloons by J.A. Walker

'My mum and dad still play their old pop tunes before they go out at weekends, and you know I've got to shout to them to tell them to turn down the noise.'

- Even though the Pop world is dead it can still be seen in and around the new culture who call themselves Silent Faces.

- *Novels of the future take many forms but John A. Walker's The Pop Festival is an interesting variant on a familiar theme.*

RUSSELL LEADBETTER
EVENING TIMES

- *Futuristic novel charts a group of friends as they make for a festival in Glasgow, in celebration of the music of the past...well worth investigating.*

COLIN DONALD
SCOTSMAN

Music from the novel:

<https://walkerjohna.wordpress.com/about/>

http://www.amazon.com/The-Silent-Scene/dp/B002L5RJW4/ref=dm_ap_alb7?ie=UTF8&qid=1268916603&sr=301-1

LET'S DANCE THE NIGHT AWAY

Let's dance the night away,
I'll sing and you can sway,
Tomorrow is far away,
Hey Hey.
We'll watch the crowds go by,
See the strange designs,
And how the shadows just fade.
Words are endless thoughts,
And dreams are all you've got,
When the music just fades away.

Song written John A.Walker: 1987
Release date: 2000. Produced by Robin Rankin
Album: Silent Scene
Copyright John A.Walker (JWYOU)
Cosmos Original Records, PPL member

ONE DAY OF LIFE

I'll write your name across the sky,
It's crazy, but I know why,
I'm not afraid,
I'll do anything,

To make a dark world bright.
And catch the thoughts in my eyes,
But you know they can't disguise,
You're beautiful,
I'll do anything,
You know what love is like,
The moon and stars up in the sky,
They cast a spell into your mind.
I'll try and find the things you like,
In a crazy world where wrong is right,
I'm not afraid, I'll do anything to know what love is like,
It casts a spell into your mind.
One day of life,
When moments seem to last,
Well take some photographs,
And drive away.

Song written John A.Walker: 1987
Release date: 2000. Produced by Robin Rankin
Album: Silent Scene
Copyright John A.Walker (JWYOU)
Cosmos Original Records, PPL member

SING

Your life is like a seesaw,
But you are ready for the real world,
With nothing to say that's kind,
Doesn't matter if it's London, if it's Glasgow or New York,
You'll see death, and you'll see life,
And all the things that you crave for,
Not just love, but you want danger,
Take your time,
As you walk on, as you talk on, sing:
La la la la la...
You listen to street songs,

From the voice of a Walkman,
Somehow it's strange,
But somehow it's nice,
You move in a free world,
You got eyes like a dream child,
But you know how to think, cause you know how to find.
You know the world is full of danger,
Full of creeps, queers and strangers,
But you want love,
You want to be loved,
Cause love is kind.

Song written John A.Walker: 1987
Release date: 2000. Produced by Robin Rankin
Album: Silent Scene
Copyright John A.Walker (JWYOU)
Cosmos Original Records, PPL member

TIME AND TIDE

Time and tide,
Waits for no one,
I wonder why watching the landscape lines,
Where the sky meets an ocean,
And nothing to save you from your fate in life.
Memories face she looks so lonely,
The future is made glazed in a failing light,
For tomorrow is no ones,
Lost and afraid by the thoughts, and the things you like,
Till you find,
Time leaves no one,
Does time.

Song written and produced John A.Walker: 1987
Release date: 2000
Album: Silent Scene

Copyright John A.Walker (JWYOU)
Cosmos Original Records, PPL member

DJ DOH RAY ME

Down at the club with Criss and Gary,
I like the girl with the beautiful eyes,
I like the girl with the beautiful hair.
Down at the club with Criss and Gary,
Music and lights are everywhere,
DJ doh Ray.

Song written and produced John A.Walker: 1987
Release date: 2003
Album: Silent Scene
Copyright John A.Walker (JWYOU)
Cosmos Original Records, PPL member

SHINE ON FIND LOVE

Shine on,
Find Love.

Song written and produced John A.Walker: 1987
Release date: 2003
Album: Silent Scene
Copyright John A.Walker (JWYOU)
Cosmos Original Records, PPL member

DANCING LOVING

Dancing loving.

Song written and produced John A.Walker: 1987
Release date: 2003
Album: Silent Scene

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